The Story of the Hunter Brothers of Sparta, Illinois

By Robert Hunter Hayes

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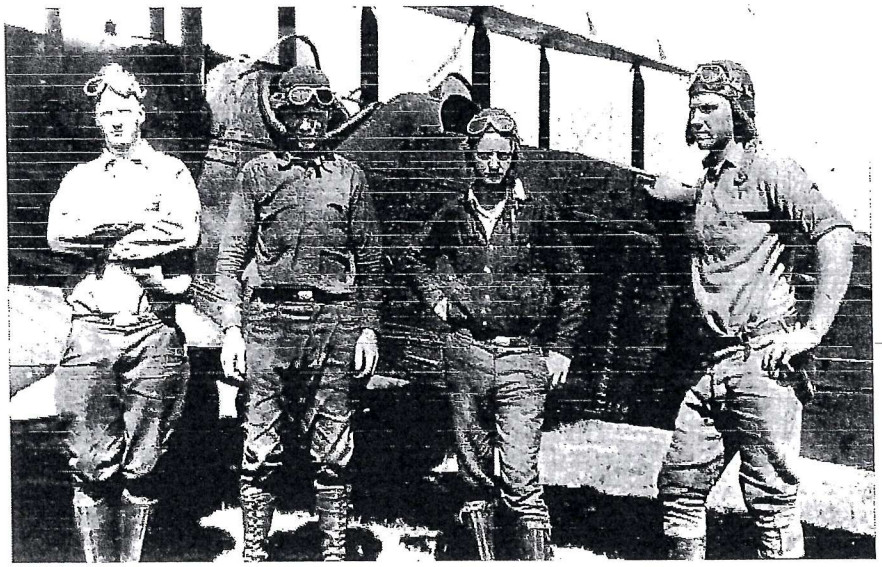

Walter, Albert, Kenneth and John Hunter

Photo Courtesy Herschel Hunter

This is the history of the four Hunter brothers, their accomplishments both as a group and individually. It also tells of the tragedies that the Hunters faced. Kenneth served as a production test pilot for Lockheed Aircraft during World War II. Walter became an airline pilot, starting with Robertson Aircraft Corporation in 1928 and retiring from American Airlines in 1966 as their most senior captain with more than 30,000 hours flying time.

Walter's story also tells the development of what is now American Airlines. Kenneth's story tells about how the United States prepared pilots and airplanes for World War II.

This provides the history of four young men that were born on a farm to becoming significant contributors to the advancement of aviation in the United States in the mid twentieth century and also gives some essential information about the various airplanes the Hunters flew.

This also tells of the famous aviators that they knew and flew with. People such as Charles A. Lindbergh, James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle and Harlan A. "Bud" Gurney. The book should be of interest to people wanting to know the history of the Hunter brothers and persons enjoying information about airplanes and the airlines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been written without the help of two very special people. Herschel Hunter, son of Albert Hunter, is still living and has been a great resource by providing stories, documents, information and pictures about his father and uncles.

Carol Pirtle, an accomplished author, provided much research information from the local newspaper. In addition, Carol provided much needed help and guidance in telling the story of the Hunter Brothers of Sparta Illinois. This information has enabled me to reconstruct the lives and aviation accomplishments of these four brothers.

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INTRODUCTION

This was written to tell the story of four men who rose from simple farm boys to become significant participants in the development of aviation in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century. In doing so, they met and were well acquainted with many of the famous aviators of the time. Their accomplishments were the result of dedication and hard work because none of the four had advanced in education beyond high school.

I have lived in Sparta, Illinois the majority of my life. I heard many stories about the Hunter brothers and some of their exploits. As time has advanced, many of the people who told me those stories have passed. I have spent the past several years researching the lives of the four Hunter brothers. My aim was to find facts to support the stories that I heard about the Hunter brothers. My mother (Mary Elizabeth Robb Hayes) told me that we were related to the Hunter brothers. I now know that my mother was a third cousin to the six Hunter children. I often wondered why, with their aviation skills, that none of the four brothers served in the military during WW II.

Many people in the Sparta area today are not fully aware of the accomplishments of the four Hunter brothers in the field of aviation. The local airport was named to honor those four young brothers and their accomplishments.

I have had the privilege of meeting one of the brothers, Walter. The occasion was the 50th Anniversary Celebration of their epic World Flight Endurance Record flight at Hunter Field in Sparta; Walter was the only one of the four brothers alive on that occasion.

Robert Hunter Hayes

Sparta, Illinois

December 2015

PROLOGUE

At 6:21 pm on Friday, July 4, 1930, oil-soaked and exhausted, John and Kenneth Hunter gently landed their airplane, a well-used Stinson SM-1 Detroiter named the "City of Chicago", on the runway at Sky Harbor Airport in Northbrook, Illinois, which is about 20 miles northwest of downtown Chicago. It was the first time either man had set foot on earth for more than 23 days. As the engine, a 300 hp Wright J-6 Whirlwind, that had performed flawlessly for the entire 23 day venture became silent, the two brothers shared a quiet moment together before the crowd that had gathered to witness their deed swarmed their airplane. Their lives would change forever, as would life at their home in Sparta, Illinois, 350 miles to the south. [1]

The July 10, 17 and 24, 1930 editions of the *Sparta News Plaindealer* reported on the exploits of the two Sparta boys who became international celebrities. An article in the July 8, 1930 edition of the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* told about The Hunter family and the reaction of the residents of the city of Sparta, Illinois who were unable to be at Sky Harbor Airport. Other national publications, such as *Time Magazine*, also had articles about the Hunter brothers. The Rotogravure section of the *New York Times* from the previous week contained pictures of the Hunter brothers.

After the reception at the airport, which included a radio broadcast over the national radio networks, John, Kenneth, Albert and Walter Hunter; their mother Mrs. Ida Hunter, their sister Irene Hunter and Mrs. Albert Hunter were taken by a long automobile procession to the "House on the Roof" at the Hotel Sherman in downtown Chicago. They checked in as guests of the hotel management. John and Kenneth's clothes and faces were completely covered in motor oil, hardly the attire that special guests of the prestigious hotel would wear.

When the Hunter family arrived at the hotel, John and Kenneth were able to enjoy their first bath in more than twenty three days. After a refreshing bath, John and Kenneth were required to sit and listen to several long speeches. After the speeches by their business manager and other interested persons were completed, John and Kenneth were finally able to retire to bed for a long and badly needed sleep. They both were awakened at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday morning

to make their first appearance on stage at the Palace Theatre in downtown Chicago. All four Hunter brothers and their sister Irene spent the next week making three appearances daily on stage at the Palace Theatre. Their stage appearances consisted of an introduction of each of the Hunters, followed by a brief speech from John, Kenneth, Irene, Albert, and Walter Hunter. Their orations included a few wisecracks and interesting stories about their experiences over the past few weeks.

During that week, the Hunters were honored guests at a number of banquets in Chicago. These banquets were sponsored by such people as the very popular entertainer Will Rogers; Charles S."Casey" Jones, an executive of Curtiss-Wright Corporation; and members of the Chicago Board of Trade.[2] Imagine the feelings these small-town people must have been experiencing. It might have reminded them of the turbulence created by their Wright J-6 Whirlwind engine.

As guests of the Hotel Sherman, the Hunter family was not accustomed to all the special attention they received. For example, on Saturday morning, a waiter attempted to serve breakfast to their mother, Mrs. Ida Hunter, while she was still in bed. Mrs. Hunter, who had spent most of life on a farm, admonished the waiter by telling him "I have never had breakfast in bed in my life, and I won't start now." Another example was when Albert put sugar in his cup of consommé. Albert's defense was that he thought it was a cup of tea; he did not know it was a cup of soup. We are not in Sparta anymore, his family joked.

The Hunters were joined at the "House on the Roof" by many family members and friends. The group included Albert Hunter's four children: Elizabeth, age 11, Pauline, 9, Eileen, 7, and Herschel 4, Miss Gladys Hodam of Champaign, Illinois, fiancé of Walter Hunter; and Mrs. Ida Hunter's brother and wife, Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Blair. Albert's daughter, Pauline, was upset with newspaper reports that she, her sisters, and brother were not in Chicago but were at home being cared for by neighbors. In fact, all four of Albert's children were brought to Chicago and joined their parents at the Hotel Sherman. All of Albert's children stayed in Chicago until Friday, July 11, when they were taken back to their home in southern Illinois by neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Byrd. Enroute to their home, they spent the night in Centralia, Illinois

at the home of some friends of the Byrds. While in Centralia, the three girls were thrilled to have their picture taken and to be interviewed by a reporter for the *Centralia Sentinel*. In Chicago the newspaper reporters had paid very little attention to them.

The only members of the Hunter family not present were Sister Mable who was a tuberculosis patient in a hospital at Danville, New York and John's wife, Laura. John and Laura were secretly married on Tuesday, May 7, 1929, by a justice of the peace in St. Charles, Missouri. They would have announced their wedding, but Laura had been a school teacher and many schools would only employ unmarried teachers. Laura had been at Sky Harbor Airport earlier in the week, but was on her way back to Sparta with her sister, Mrs. E. F. Parrent, when John and Kenneth completed their record-setting flight.

Albert's son, Herschel, kept the ensemble in Chicago entertained with his antics and questions. Herschel would sit around the fountain on the roof attempting to catch the goldfish swimming in the pool. As gifts from the many well-wishers arrived for the Hunter brothers, Herschel asked his mother if Santa Claus would arrive after all of the presents had been delivered.

John, Walter, Kenneth, and Irene Hunter received many letters containing marriage proposals. This was probably quite amusing to John whose marriage was not yet public knowledge. Walter's fiancé was also not amused by the marriage proposals to Walter. Some events provided entertainment for the entire family. For example, Walter entered the suite one evening wearing a monocle that some admirer had sent him.

Congratulations poured into the hotel by telegram and mail for the Hunter brothers. One of the congratulatory telegrams was from their friend, Charles A. Lindbergh. Lindbergh had barnstormed with the Hunters and had visited them in Sparta on several occasions.

The attention the Hunter family received was new and unusual to them. Prior to this month, they were just a farm family from southern Illinois. Their humble beginnings had not prepared them for all of the attention they were receiving from many parts of the world. Just who were the Hunters and why all of the fuss about them flying an airplane? The United States

was still deep in the Great Depression, the reception and praise the Hunter family was receiving was totally out of character for the time. It was the golden age of aviation, and the population was thirsty for anything that would prop up their sagging spirits. Just what did the Hunter family do to receive such a reception? John and Kenneth Hunter had just completed a 23 day continuous flight, a new world flight endurance record. That is at least a portion of the story of the Hunter brothers of Sparta, Illinois.

The Hunter Family Growing Up and Losing Father

Ancestors of the Hunter family migrated to the United States from Ireland in 1759 and settled around Charleston, South Carolina. The Hunters later moved to Chester County South Carolina, becoming prosperous farmers while their numbers increased. The Hunters' were devout members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The Reformed Presbyterian Church was opposed to people owning slaves as many families in South Carolina did. About 1829, some members of the Hunter family left South Carolina and moved to southern Illinois. Illinois was considered a slave-free state at that time, although some residents of the southern part of Illinois owned slaves.

Archibald, one of the children of the Hunter family that left South Carolina, married Mary Henderson on March 31, 1864. They settled in Six Mile Prairie a short distance northwest of Cutler in Perry County, Illinois, just east of Randolph County in southern Illinois. Archibald and Mary Hunter had three children, two sons and a daughter. They adopted a fourth daughter. The first-born was a son named Harry who went on to become a doctor, setting up his practice in the southern Illinois community of Staunton. The second son, Alexander, was born in 1876.

As was the frequent custom, Alexander, the youngest son, remained on the family farm with his parents. Alexander married Ida Jane Blair on October, 29, 1894. He and Ida Jane's marriage produced six children. Albert William was born on August 20, 1896, Margaret Mabel was born October 11, 1899, Irene Mary was born November 18, 1901, John Alexander was born May 26, 1903, Walter James was born March 11, 1906, and Kenneth Blair was born June 18, 1907. All six children were born at the family farm on Six Mile Prairie in Perry County Illinois.

Life on the farm for the six children of Alexander and Ida Jane was typical of many farm families in the area. In the early 1900s farming was done by horse drawn implements because few farmers could afford the new tractors that were becoming available. Like most farm families, the children helped with the chores around the farm. These farm chores taught each of the children the value and rewards of hard work. The work on the farm also became the basis of the mechanical skills the four boys would develop.

As a young boy, Albert prided himself on how fast he could run. He boasted that he could outrun his father, Alexander. When his father got mad at him about something, Albert ran away from his father so his father could not catch him. He ran in circles, getting close enough to his father for his father to take an occasional swat at him. He continued doing this until his father's temper would subside, and then he could stop running from his father.

Due to ill health, Archibald and Mary Hunter turned the farm over to Alexander and moved to the city of Sparta, in adjoining Randolph County, during early 1912. On June 20, 1912, Alexander's father, Archibald W. Hunter, passed away at his home in Sparta from heart disease. He had been battling his heart disease for about two years. Archie Hunter was survived by his widow, Mary Henderson Hunter and two sons, Alexander on the farm at Six Mile Prairie and Dr. Harry Hunter of Staunton, Illinois. Mary Henderson Hunter died a few years later at the home of her nephew, Edward Hunter, located on Six Mile Prairie, on April 10, 1914.[3]

In early July 1912, Alexander left the farm on a trip to buy used rubber. For this trip, Alexander carried a sum of money with him in a money belt. After leaving the farm, he traveled south to the Big Muddy River, where he boarded a riverboat. What transpired on that riverboat is unknown.

According to information obtained from the General John A. Logan museum in Murphysboro, Illinois, on July 12, 1912, a man's body was found floating in the Big Muddy River near Murphysboro, Illinois. The body carried no identification and no money. The cause of death was a gunshot. With no identification on the body, the unknown body was buried in Tower Grove Cemetery in Murphysboro. Later, after Alexander failed to return to the farm,

investigation revealed that the unknown body was most likely that of Alexander Hunter. The body was exhumed, and the remains were reburied in the Cutler, Illinois City Cemetery. Some people held the mistaken belief that Alexander was killed by a team of runaway mules, but information from the John A. Logan County Museum in Murphysboro proves this belief not to be correct.

Alexander's death left a wife, Ida, and six children; Albert 15, Mabel 12, Irene 10, John 9, Walter 6 and Kenneth 5. The cost of exhuming the body and reburying it was a financial hardship for the Hunter family. Albert had just completed the seventh grade, so he found work at the Ford Garage in Sparta. Albert was big for his age, so he asked people who knew him not to tell his age, because he was receiving adult wages. Albert did not return to school.

Albert helped his mother by becoming a father figure to his sisters and brothers. Albert, realizing the importance of education, insisted that his siblings all complete their schooling. Mabel soon began work to help support the fatherless family. Mabel taught school and rode a horse into Sparta to work at the telephone office each night. Perhaps the most important lesson Alexander's death taught all six of the children was how to overcome adversity by working together. Albert was a diligent task master. He required every one of his siblings to do their part of the daily tasks to help their mother and the family.

Despite their situation, the siblings found many ways to amuse themselves. One day Walter was amusing himself by throwing a big hay tine, used to lift bundles of hay into the barn loft, high into the air. The hay tine came down and stuck in the back of one of Albert's prize boar hogs. Albert had purchased the boar hog to improve the quality of the hogs on the family farm. Walter quickly smeared mud over the hog's back to hide the wound. Several days later the boar mysteriously died. Walter did not confess his actions and tell Albert about the incident until many years later.

Growing up on a farm, hard physical work was something the Hunter children quickly became used to. Farm work involves a lot of physical labor. Even when working, the boys often

resorted to physical means to settle their disputes. Always friendly, those physical scraps were just another game that helped them pass their time.

After working at Ford garage for a period, Albert quit and went to work for John "Doc" Lyle, a veterinarian, and owner of Sparta Motor Company that sold Chevrolet automobiles. Lyle sent Albert to a General Motors school in St. Louis to learn more about repairing automobiles. While at the school, Albert failed to make his normal wages. Due to his strength, Albert broke a number of tools at the school. The cost of replacing those tools was deducted from his wages.

About the age of 16, Albert quit working at the Sparta Motor Company and went to work at the Roseboro Coal Mine southeast of Sparta. He rode a horse from the farm to the coal mine each day. The Roseboro Coal Mine was located about four miles southeast of Sparta. R. H. Roseboro, one of Sparta's best known business men, was a manufacturer, owner, and operator of the Roseboro Coal Mine. He also owned and operated a brick plant associated with the coal mine. Thomas Moffat, a boss for Mr. Roseboro and a later partner, left the Roseboro Coal Company about 1902 and started his own coal mine, and Moffat Coal Company[4]. Albert left the Roseboro Coal Mine and started working for Thomas Moffat at the Moffat Coal Mine. In time, the other three Hunter brothers would join Albert, working at the Moffat Coal Mine.

About 1915, Ida Hunter and the six children left the farm and moved into the city of Sparta. They initially lived in several locations around Sparta but finally settled in a large brick house on the North West corner of Dickey and McClurken streets. That house was owned by a relative of Mrs. Ida Hunter. On the east side of Dickey Street, across the street from the house, was a long narrow field that became the home for "Blossom", the family cow.

Sparta was a small rural Midwestern community located in Randolph County, Illinois. In 1915, some of the streets were paved with bricks. The remaining streets in the town were simply dirt streets. The state highways leading to and from the community were just now being paved with concrete.

The business section of Sparta contained several dry goods stores, and at least two grocery stores. There were also a number of neighborhood grocery stores scattered throughout

the community. Industry consisted of several coal mines and a brick plant. A local electric generating plant provided electricity to the businesses and some homes. Another industry was the Sparta Plow Works that manufactured plows, harrows, and coulters. The implements were sold not only to local farmers, but also to farmers in several Midwestern states. Sparta also had several mills that produced flour from the wheat grown by area farmers.[5]

On June 20, 1917, Albert married Pearl Alexander, and they settled in another house on Dickey Street just north of "Blossom's" pasture. Albert and his wife started a family that eventually reached four, three daughters and one son. Elizabeth Edna was born on August 14, 1918. Pauline was born on February 2, 1921. Eileen was born February 17, 1923 and Herschel Albert was born September 2, 1925.

While the Hunter family was living on Dickey Street, a nickname was bestowed on Kenneth. That nickname became the name by which most local people knew Kenneth. It seems that Kenneth became good friends with a plump young man. Since the skinny Kenneth and his friend were usually together, they became known as "Pork" and "Beans". "Pork" was Kenneth's plump friend, and Kenneth became "Beans".

After sister Mabel graduated from high school, she attended the Gregg Business College in Chicago, Illinois and the International Business College in Fort Wayne, Indiana. After completing the Business College, Mabel was employed by the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad in Chicago. Sometime later Mabel was stricken with tuberculosis and spent a good part of her adult life in hospitals. That disease led to her death at 33 years of age.[6]

After completing high school, Irene Hunter taught school, first in rural one room schools, then eventually in the Sparta school system. Having been raised with four brothers, Irene was as scrappy as they were. One story told about Irene was that on one warm spring day she was teaching in a one room rural school and was writing on the blackboard. Two young boys, students in her classroom, took the opportunity while Irene's attention was not on her students, to escape the classroom through an open window. The two boys went across the road to a farm pond, stripped to their underwear, and proceeded to enjoy a swim. Irene, realizing the boys had

escaped, left the classroom and waded out into the pond where they were enjoying a swim, grabbed them both by the neck, and marched them back to the classroom without their clothes.

As the Hunter boys finished high school, they joined Albert working in the Moffat Coal Mine. That would lead to their adventure reported in the next section.

First Airplanes

It is reported that at the Moffat Coal Mine, the four Hunter brothers could dig and load more coal in a shift that any other crew working at the mine. Despite the tussles the boys had growing up, the work ethic they developed taught them the value of teamwork. Their success as a crew in the coal mine was just one of the results.

The demand for coal in southern Illinois was significantly decreased during the summer months. Therefore, the local coal mines built up a stockpile of coal and laid off many of the miners for the summer months. The four Hunter brothers took this layoff time opportunity to ride into St. Louis, Missouri, and trade their motorcycles for newer motorcycles. Albert preferred the Indian brand motorcycle; the other three brothers all preferred the Harley Davison brand.

During their free time, the Hunter boys terrorized Sparta residents by doing stunts on their motorcycles. Sometimes they rode down the main street standing on the seat of their motorcycles. It appeared that the boys had no fear. Actually, the boys practiced the stunts well before displaying them to the public. In spite of their skill, the stunts the Hunter boys performed on their motorcycles terrified and unnerved many of the local citizens. There were frequent complaints about their antics on the motorcycles. Years later, those motorcycle stunts were still what most Sparta people remember about the Hunter brothers

In June 1924, on their annual voyage to trade motorcycles, the brothers traveled west of downtown St. Louis past the town of Anglum, Missouri. At Anglum, they noticed several airplanes parked at what is now Lambert International Airport. Albert and his three brothers

stopped and inquired about the airplanes. The airplanes were for sale by Robertson Aircraft Corporation.

The airplane that attracted the Hunter brothers' attention was a war surplus Standard bi-plane. The Hunter brothers decided that rather than trade their motorcycles for new ones they would instead use their money to buy an airplane. Therefore, they purchased a Standard J-1 Turnabout that had been converted for civilian use. The airplane was powered by a 150 hp Hispano-Suiza V-8 engine. The airplane had been converted from a World War I surplus Standard J-1 to a Lincoln Standard Turnabout by the Nebraska Aircraft Corporation of Lincoln, Nebraska. The Nebraska Aircraft Corporation of Lincoln, Nebraska was reorganized by Ray Page in 1922. The company had been founded in 1919 by A. G. Hebb to recondition surplus World War I airplanes for civilian use.[7] When Ray Page became president of the company, he opened the Lincoln Aircraft School, to teach future pilots and aid sales of the reconditioned aircraft.[8]

Albert assigned his brother John, to stay at the airport and learn how to fly the airplane. The other brothers returned to Sparta.[9] John did just that. After taking flying instructions for about 90 minutes, John decided to fly the airplane to Sparta. Not being knowledgeable about navigation by air, John simply followed the roads that he and his brothers had taken to St. Louis. When John and the airplane arrived in Sparta, he chose to land the aircraft in the pasture across Dickey Street from the Hunter house. That pasture was the home of "Blossom", the family cow. Both John and "Blossom" survived the landing. The airplane did not fare quite so well, because there was a cross wind. Landing an airplane in a cross wind is difficult for an experienced pilot. An inexperienced pilot landing in the cross wind caused the airplane to tip up, and one landing gear and a wing tip were damaged. The Hunter brothers applied their mechanical skills and soon repaired the damage to the airplane.

Robertson Aircraft sent two men to Sparta to help the Hunter brothers with their airplane. They were Harlan A. "Bud" Gurney and Herbert Bud. Gurney was an accomplished pilot. He soon helped the Hunter brothers become skilled airplane pilots. Herbert Bud was a mechanic who helped the Hunters maintain and repair their airplane. Not only did Gurney teach them how

to fly the airplane, he also taught them how to perform stunts with the airplane. Soon, the Hunters returned to Anglum, Missouri, purchased a second airplane that they repaired and sold to Harlan Gurney. Over the next several weeks, citizens of Sparta were treated to almost daily air shows as Gurney and the Hunter brothers perfected their flying and stunting skills. That summer the Hunter Brothers and Bud Gurney traveled in their airplanes to towns and communities in southern Illinois and southeast Missouri selling rides to local citizens who came out to see their flying machines.[10]

On July 21, 1924 Bud Gurney was forced to make an emergency landing while trying out one of the Hunter brothers' airplanes. The airplane had just been overhauled, and Gurney was flying the airplane over the business section of Sparta. The engine on the airplane quit, and Gurney glided the airplane to a safe landing in a field just outside the Sparta city limits. An investigation proved that water in the gasoline caused the motor to quit. After draining the water from the fuel tank, Gurney was able to take off again in the airplane and return it to the landing field south of the county fairgrounds in Sparta.[11]

The Hunter brothers and Harlan Gurney continued visiting various towns in southeast Missouri and southern Illinois and carrying passengers in their two airplanes. While visiting a town in Missouri, they collected $360.00 from passengers in one day.[12] While touring with the Hunter Flying Circus, Gurney met Helen Voges of Red Bud, Illinois. Later, Helen became his wife.

During August and September 1924, the Hunter brothers and Harlan Gurney carried about 2500 passengers in their airplanes without a single accident.[13] The Hunter Flying Circus was a feature of the Jersey County Fair in Jerseyville, Illinois from September 9 to 13, 1924. The flying circus featured wing walking by Herbert Bud. Bud sat on small trapeze attached to the landing gear and then threw himself to the rear and hung by his heels from the trapeze. What the crowd did not know was that Herbert Bud had attached two steel cables to the trapeze. The cables ran from a harness under his coveralls so that he could not fall off the trapeze. The show also continued with Herbert Bud transferring from one airplane to another as they passed the grandstand. Not all of the performances went as planned. During one transfer, the wings of the

two airplanes hooked together. Herbert Bud separated the two wings that were hooked together by kicking against the wing of the other airplane with his feet as he lay on his back. In addition to the show, The Hunter brothers and Bud Gurney also carried passengers in their airplanes, charging them $5 each for the ride.[14]

The Hunter flying circus was featured at the Randolph County Fair in Sparta for four days starting on Tuesday, September 16, 1924. The performances included wing-walking, parachute leaps, changing from one plane to another in mid-air by Herbert Bud, loop the loops and tail spins by the airplane pilots. The Hunter Flying Circus now had three airplanes and carried passengers from the landing field just south of the fairgrounds for a seven to ten minute ride over Sparta. The charge was $3 for each passenger. [15]

In October 1924 Albert Hunter flew his airplane, a Curtiss JN-4 Canuck, to the International Air Races at Dayton, Ohio. A Canuck was a Curtiss JN-7 built in Canada. Riding with Albert was Charles Exter from Belleville, Illinois, one of the stunt aviators in the Hunter Flying Circus. On the way to Dayton, Albert stopped at Brookville, Indiana, for fuel. Several of the local residents requested that Albert give them a show of aerial stunts. Albert, in a hurry to arrive at Dayton, promised that he would stop at Brookville on his way back to Sparta, Illinois, after the air races.

One of the features at The 1924 Dayton Air Races was the flight of the Barling Bomber, which had been assembled in Dayton. The Barling Bomber was an experimental long-range heavy bomber that was built for the U.S. Army Air Corps. The airplane had three wings. The middle wing had no control surfaces and was shorter and narrower than the top and bottom wings. The airplane was powered by six Liberty L-12A engines, each rated at 420 hp. The six engines were mounted level with the fuselage between the lower and middle wings. Four of the engines were in a tractor arrangement with the two other engines placed in a pusher position just outboard of the tractor engines. The tractor arranged engines had the propellers mounted in front of the engine so the thrust of the rotating propeller pulled the aircraft though the air. The pusher arranged engines had the propeller behind the engine so the thrust of the rotating propeller pushed the airplane through the air. The Barling Bomber had a wingspan of 120 feet and 65 feet

long and 27 feet high. It was designed to carry a crew of seven, two pilots and five gunners. The bomber was armed with seven 0.30 Cal. Machine guns and could carry up to 5000 lbs of bombs. Only one bomber was built and the USAAC considered the airplane a failure. The experimental Barling Bomber was later destroyed by burning it at the Fairfield Air depot in 1930 [16]

On Friday, October 10, 1924 on the return trip from Dayton, Albert distributed handbills as they passed over towns near Brookville, Indiana announcing a flying circus at Brookville on Saturday, October 11. As Albert attempted to land at Brookville, the airplane hit an air pocket about 200 feet above the ground and crashed into a corn field. Albert was only slightly injured in the crash. Just prior to the crash, Charles Exter placed his head under the dash in the front cockpit and was killed in the crash.[17] Such tragedies did not deter the Hunters from continuing their air shows.

On Sunday, May 17, 1925 an act in the Hunter Flying Circus at Chester, Illinois did not go quite as planned. Charles Hamilton, a laundry worker from Chester attempted a parachute leap from an airplane being flown by John Hunter. The parachute failed to release from the case that was tied to the support of one of the wings on the airplane. The result was that Hamilton was suspended at the end of a rope hanging about eight feet below the landing gear of the airplane. The drag of Hamilton hanging from the airplane caused the plane to lose altitude. John Hunter could not land the airplane with Hamilton hanging beneath. Albert Hunter recognized that a problem existed and took off in another airplane to investigate what was causing the problem. After about thirty minutes, Hamilton was able to pull himself up to the parachute bag and unlace the bag so the parachute could deploy. The parachute released and opened, permitting Hamilton to glide to a safe landing in a nearby wheat field. After John Hunter landed the airplane, it was discovered that the parachute bag had almost torn loose from the wing support. If this had happened, the parachute would not have opened and Hamilton would have had a fatal fall to the ground. Hamilton returned to the landing field and wanted to make another parachute drop. John Hunter declared that he would not permit another amateur to drop from his airplane.[18]

Misfortune occurred during many of the aerial stunts the Hunters performed. On June 7, 1925, Albert and John Hunter piloted two of the airplanes that were performing in the Harry H. Perkins Flying Circus at Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Two young women from Cobden, Illinois approached John Hunter and requested a ride in his airplane. John agreed to give them a ride. The young women took seats in the front cockpit. As John took the airplane into the air, one of the girls stood up, and it appeared to John that the girl was about to jump from the airplane. John quickly attempted to land the airplane. In the landing attempt, the airplane crashed into a tree. The gasoline tank above the girls head burst, showering the girls with gasoline. The gasoline caught fire and despite efforts by John and bystanders to free the girls, both girls burned to death.[19]

The Hunter Flying Circus was performing at the Randolph County Fair in Sparta on Saturday, September 19, 1925. The final event of the day was seventeen-year-old Kenneth making a parachute leap from a plane flown by his brother John. Kenneth dropped from the airplane about a mile southwest of the fairgrounds. A strong wind from the southwest carried Kenneth towards the grandstand. He made a perfect landing on the roof of the grandstand, but the wind caught his parachute and pulled him off the roof. Kenneth fell to the ground, about forty feet below, breaking his left wrist. The fracture caused his physician, Dr. C. O. Boynton, to keep Kenneth from fulfilling a flying engagement in St. Louis the next day.[20]

An article in the October 14, 1926 issue of the *Sparta News Plaindealer* reported that Albert, John, and Walter Hunter spent the summer in the New York City vicinity giving airplane rides. It also reported that they sold one of the three planes they took east with them.

John and Kenneth Hunter returned to Sparta on October 12, 1927 after having spent the summer in Hackensack, New Jersey carrying passengers in their airplanes. On one flight with a 19-year-old boy as a passenger, the boy had his hearing restored. The boy became deaf at the age of eight years. John Hunter, piloting the airplane, made a dive of several thousand feet. After the airplane landed, the boy could hear. Several months later, the Hunters checked with the boy again, and he been able to hear ever since his airplane ride.

Sparta did not have a dedicated landing field for airplanes. The Hunter brothers made several attempts to develop interest and funding to create a local airplane landing field in Sparta. There never became enough interest or funds to develop the landing field, so Albert Hunter purchased a farm located north of Sparta, in the southeastern corner of St. Clair County during 1928 and moved his family to that location. Eventually Albert built a landing strip on the farm.

One of the Hunter brothers' airplanes was destroyed on Saturday, May 5, 1928. John Hunter was giving an airplane ride to his two sisters, Mabel and Irene and a friend, Marshall Petty. John landed in a field north of Sparta. Just after landing, gasoline leaking from the fuel tank was ignited by the hot airplane engine. Everyone escaped, but the plane was destroyed by fire.[21]

Since the Robertson Aircraft Company had such a profound influence on the lives of the four Hunter brothers, and would continue to influence the life of Walter Hunter, it is worthwhile to know a bit more about the Robertson Aircraft Company.

The Robertson Aircraft Company

Robertson Aircraft Corporation of St. Louis was founded in 1923 by William B. and Frank Robertson. St. Louis brothers William and Frank Robertson learned to fly while serving in the U S Army during World War I. The war ended before either of the brothers were assigned to go overseas. Returning home in the spring of 1919, they borrowed $1,800 from their father, to purchase a war surplus Curtiss Jenny. They painted Robertson Aircraft Company on the side of the airplane and began their careers in the aviation business. Home base was a government air mail field in Forest Park near downtown St. Louis. Their business consisted of carrying passengers, giving flying lessons, and performing exhibition flights at county fairs and other events. When they could get away, the Robertson brothers made barnstorming trips throughout the Midwest. In February 1921, Robertson Aircraft Corporation was officially incorporated in the state of Missouri, showing one Curtiss Jenny, one spare OX-5 engine, and a hanger at Forest Park air field as its assets. Older brother William was listed as president of the corporation. Younger brother Frank was vice-president.

By 1922, the Robertson brothers were operating from two airports, the original field at Forest Park and a new field they had helped establish called St. Louis Flying Field. Originally it was called Kinloch Field, a place for launching balloons. Major Albert Bond Lambert, the first person in St. Louis to hold a pilot's license, converted a corn field into an airfield at his own expense. In 1925 Lambert converted the airfield into a base for passenger and freight service. In 1928, Albert Lambert sold the air field to the City of St. Louis. Lambert Field then became the first municipal airport in the United States. Today, Lambert Filed is known as Lambert - St. Louis International Airport.

The Robertson's fleet of airplanes had also grown in just one year to include five Jennies, one Curtiss Oriole and one Sturtevant Biplane. During that year, the brothers made 5,000 flights, carried 1,000 passengers, and hauled 3,000 pounds of freight (that is a LOT of freight in a Jenny!). Robertson Aircraft Corporation's reputation and bank account were growing rapidly.

One of the most important things the Robertsons did with their profits was to buy up several hundred Curtiss OX-5 engines from government surplus. In very short order, they had the market cornered for this popular airplane engine. The next step was to get into the airplane rebuilding and selling business. During 1924, the company acquired 35 more war surplus airplanes, some of which it assembled in its repair shops and sold. By the start of 1925, Robertson Aircraft had 22 full-time mechanics on duty, reconditioning government surplus airplanes for sale. They had leased four 66 ft. x 120 ft. hangers at Lambert Field as their new base of operations. Their inventory that year showed 333 airplanes in stock ready to fly away. These included Jennies, Standards, Canucks, DH-4s, Orioles, Spads, and others. In partnership with the Nicholas-Beazley Airplane Company, the Robertsons purchased 450 government surplus Standards. They opened supply warehouses in Kansas City, San Antonio, Houston, New Orleans, and Fort Wayne, as well as at the home base in St. Louis. Robertson Aircraft Corporation was building a reputation as one of the nation's largest and most important aviation supply companies. Their success put them in a prime position to bid on one of the new government airmail contracts being offered in the summer of 1925.

Complaints from the railroad owners that the government sponsored air mail service was affecting their business caused Congressman Clyde Kelly to sponsor a bill in February 1925, called the Contract Air Mail Bill. That bill became the Air Mail act of 1925. It authorized the postmaster general to contract for domestic air mail service with commercial air carriers. The bill also set airmail rates and the amount of cash subsides to be paid to the companies that carried the mail. Henry Ford opened an air freight service between Detroit and Chicago. Soon many companies submitted bids to carry the mail. [22]

The Air Mail act of 1925 set the stage for what are now the commercial airlines of the United States. In addition, the early mail contracts helped some of the fledgling aircraft manufacturing companies to survive and grow. Many of the early pilots flying air mail went on to become important participants in the advancement of aviation during the early part of the twentieth century in the United States.

During the summer of 1925, the postmaster general advertised for bids for the first eight airmail feeder routes. Contract Air Mail route 2 (CAM-2) for Chicago to St. Louis was awarded to Robertson Aircraft [23] Robertson hired Charles A. Lindbergh as their chief air mail pilot. Robertson Aircraft had a fleet of four DeHavilland DH-4 airplanes with 400-hp Liberty engines to be used to fly the airmail. Lindberg hired his friend Bud Gurney to maintain the aircraft as well as be one of the air mail pilots. In addition, Lindbergh hired Thomas P. Nelson, Phillip R. Love, Leslie H. Smith, E. L. Solonger, Ray Wassall and Ira McConaughey as air mail pilots.[24] Mail service on CAM-2 began on April 15, 1926 when Charles Lindberg made a morning flight from Chicago to St. Louis and return with stops at Peoria and Springfield, Illinois.[25]

In the winter of 1926, Charles Lindberg assigned his duties as chief air mail pilot for Robertson Aircraft Company to his friend Bud Gurney so Lindbergh could devote full attention to his preparations for his planned trans-Atlantic flight from New York to Paris.

In the spring of 1928, the Robertsons sold CAM-2 to Arnold Stifel, a local stockbroker. The reorganized company retained the name Robertson Aircraft Corporation. Arnold Stifel became president of the reorganized company; Frank Robertson became vice president; and H. H. Perkins was secretary- treasurer of the reorganized corporation. Major William B. Robertson,

President of Curtiss-Robertson Aircraft Manufacturing Company, was a member of the Board of Directors. The corporation expanded its mail and passenger business. The returns from this sale supported the start of the Curtiss-Robertson Aircraft Manufacturing Company. Major. William Robertson established a partnership with the Curtiss Company in January 1928. In July 1928 the new company began building the Curtiss Robin Airplane.[26] The Curtiss Robin was designed by the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company of Garden City, New York.[27] Most of the initial Curtiss Robins were powered by Curtiss OX-5 liquid cooled engines. Robertson Aircraft Corporation had a sizeable supply of these engines in stock.

CAM-28 was awarded to Robertson Aircraft Corporation. In preparation for that contract, Walter J. Hunter was hired as a pilot on October 1, 1928. Bud Gurney was most likely the reason that Walter was hired. CAM-28 service between St. Louis, Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri, and Omaha, Nebraska was initiated on May 1, 1929.[28] The airplanes used were Curtiss Robins with Curtiss OX-5 or Curtiss Challenger engines. This was most likely because the Curtiss Robin was being built by the Curtiss-Robertson Airplane Manufacturing Company, a division of the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. The Curtiss-Robertson manufacturing plant was located in St. Louis.

The Robertson Airplane Service Company started passenger service from St. Louis to New Orleans with stops in Memphis, Greenwood, and Jackson, Mississippi on April 27, 1930 using Ryan Brougham airplanes. The Ryan Brougham was an enclosed cabin airplane that could transport a pilot and four passengers. The airplane was powered by a Wright J-5 Whirlwind radial engine. The Ryan Brougham was similar in appearance to the Ryan "Spirit of St. Louis" that Ryan built for Charles Lindbergh. These airplanes were manufactured in St. Louis by the Mahoney- Ryan Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation.[29] Robertsons also had a branch line from Memphis to Hot Springs and Little Rock, Arkansas.[30]

On February 9, 1934, all air mail contracts were canceled by the Post Office Department. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order stating the Army Air Corps would now fly the air mail. Shortly, the U. S, Congress overturned President Roosevelt's executive

order. New air mail contracts were awarded in May 1934 and by June 1934; private contractors were once again flying the air mail over revised Post Office Department routes.[31]

Interstate airlines flew CAM-30 between Chicago, Illinois and Atlanta, Georgia. In December 1928, Interstate started a mail and passenger service between St. Louis, Missouri and Evansville, Indiana, a stop on the Chicago – Atlanta route.[32]

The Missouri town of Anglum was renamed.Robertson, Missouri on November 1, 1929 to honor William and Frank Robertson[33]

Charles Lindbergh and Harlan Gurney were key figures in the lives of the Hunter brothers. Their story is the next section.

Lindbergh and Gurney

Charles A. Lindbergh Jr. was born February 4, 1902 in Detroit, Michigan to Charles A. and Evangeline Land Lindbergh. Charles A. Lindbergh Sr. was an attorney and in 1906 was elected to Congress representing the sixth congressional district of Minnesota. Lindbergh grew up in Little Falls, Minnesota.[1] After graduating from Little Falls High School in 1918, young Charles enrolled in the University of Wisconsin to study mechanical engineering. By this time, Lindbergh had developed a fascination with aircraft and was more interested in learning to fly.

Lindbergh left the University of Wisconsin during his second year and paid Ray Page, president of the Nebraska Aircraft Corporation, $500 for flying lessons. Nebraska Aircraft Corporation was creating Lincoln Standard Turnabout Airplanes by modifying surplus WW I Standard J-1 biplanes for civilian use. The company was providing flying lessons to help sell their airplanes and fund their business. On April 9, 1922, Lindbergh took his first airplane ride in the front cockpit of a Lincoln Standard J-1 flown by Otto Timm. Seated beside Lindbergh was a Nebraska farm boy named Harland Gurney. Gurney was working at the aircraft factory doing wood finishing and removing nuts and bolts from engines so that they could be reused to make new engines. The two became lifelong friends. Lindbergh called Gurney "Buddy" which

was later shortened to "Bud" and Gurney called Lindbergh "Slim".[2] Those nicknames stayed with each for their lifetimes.

Otto Timm, a young man from Minnesota, established himself as a pioneer aviator by the age of nineteen years. He traveled to Lincoln, Nebraska to test fly the new Lincoln Standard that Nebraska Aircraft Corporation was converting and selling. Timm went on to found the Timm Airplane Company in Glendale, California. Timm was contracted to design an airplane for the movie "Flight of the Phoenix". Later, Timm assisted in the construction of the many aircraft that were flown in the movie "Spirit of St. Louis". [3]

Lindberg's flight instructor at Lincoln was Ira Biffle, a WW I pilot instructor from Patton, Missouri.[4] Bud Gurney was assigned by Ray Page to teach Lindbergh about aircraft engines. Gurney soon learned that Lindbergh knew more about engines that he did, so the teacher became the student and the student became the teacher.

Charles Lindbergh had a sense of humor and would occasionally amuse himself by pulling a practical joke on one of his friends. While at the Nebraska Aircraft Corporation, he wired a magneto to the urinal in the rest room. When his friend "Bud" Gurney went into the rest room, Lindbergh waited few minutes then energized the magneto. There was immediately a loud yelp from the rest room and a "shocked" victim quickly emerged. It was not "Bud" Gurney; rather the victim was a foreman in the aircraft plant.

After several lessons, Lindbergh was capable of flying the airplane, but was unable to solo because he could not afford the $500 bond that Ray Page required to cover possible damage to the airplane. So Lindbergh joined Erold Bahl on a barnstorming trip for about a month. Lindbergh returned to Lincoln and worked at the Nebraska Aircraft factory to pay for his living expenses. While working at the factory, Lindbergh watched Charles Hardin, a parachute maker, demonstrate his product. Lindbergh, with Ray Page's permission, made a double jump, a jump during which after the first parachute opens and then is cut away, a second then opens, completing the descent to the ground. Lindbergh took several more flying lessons from H. J.

Lynch, but did not solo. To settle with Lindbergh, Ray Page paid him $25 cash for his work at the factory and gave him a new Hardin muslin parachute.

Lindbergh later applied for and was accepted as a cadet at the US Army Flying School at Brooks Field in San Antonio, Texas. In March 1925, Lindbergh graduated from the Army Flying School and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in Army Air Service Reserve.[5.] After graduation, Lindbergh made his way to St. Louis, Missouri and joined the Missouri National Guard Air Unit. Major C. Ray Wassall was the commanding officer of the unit. [6]

In September 1925, Charles A. Lindbergh came to Sparta to visit the Hunter brothers. During that visit, Albert Hunter took Lindbergh to his home and introduced his new son Herschel. According to Herschel's mother, Pearl Hunter, Lindbergh picked up Herschel and held him. That is a distinction that not many men can claim.

Charles A. Lindbergh made a number of visits to the Hunter brothers in Sparta. Lindbergh's visits to Sparta was probably because his close friend, Harlan A. "Bud" Gurney had flown in the Hunter Flying Circus during the summer of 1924 and was well acquainted with all four of the Hunter Brothers. Gurney visited the Hunters in Sparta on a number of occasions. Gurney was dating a girl in Red Bud, Helen Voges, whom he later married.

Lindbergh rode his motorcycle to Sparta on the first visit. He asked directions to the Hunter home from John "Doc" Lyle at the Chevrolet Garage. Nearly everyone in Sparta knew that the four Hunter Brothers were aviators. When Lindbergh was asked if he flew also, his response was "Yes, I fly a little." That response was typical of the humble demeanor of Charles Lindbergh. He and the Hunter boys did stunts to see who could out do whom. One stunt they did was to ride their motorcycles off a forty foot high creek bluff to see who could travel the furthest before hitting the ground. While in Sparta, Lindbergh rode his motorcycle on trips with a number of local men. One local man claimed that Lindbergh took his new motorcycle goggles and left his old goggles when they stopped at a restaurant to eat. Another stunt Lindbergh and the Hunter brothers tried was to dive under water in a creek and see who could stay underwater the longest. Lindbergh was able to remain under water almost a minute longer that Albert Hunter. [7]

On subsequent trips, Lindberg flew his airplane to Sparta. On one trip, it was necessary to repair a rip in the fabric covering a wing. Lindbergh bought some Spar varnish on credit from White Lumber Company in nearby Marissa, Illinois. Lindbergh never returned to pay for that can of varnish.

During the summer of 1926, Kenneth Hunter worked as a stunt performer on Charles Lindbergh's plane for several weeks of barnstorming around southern Illinois and Missouri. [8]

To learn more about Charles A. Lindbergh, one can read some of the many books and articles have been written about him. Lindbergh himself has written five books. His first book "We", written in 1927, was Lindbergh's attempt to tell his life's story and to share the glory of his transatlantic flight with all of those who made that flight possible: his eight financial backers from St. Louis, Frank Mahoney President of Ryan Airlines Corporation, Chief Engineer Donald Hall and all of the workers at Ryan that built the "Spirit of St Louis" in just two months.

Lindbergh was never completely satisfied with his first book, so in 1953 he published a second book, "The Spirit of St. Louis", about the transatlantic flight to Paris. That book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1954 and was made into the movie "Spirit of St. Louis" in 1957. Lindberg's friend, Bud Gurney, was the technical advisor for that film. He was not only the technical advisor, but also flew a replica of the "Spirit of St Louis" in several of the scenes.

In all that is written about and by Lindbergh, no mention is made of his visits to Sparta. Sparta was a place well known to Charles A. Lindbergh. He promised the Hunters that he would visit them in Sparta after his Paris flight. His unexpected celebrity status made that impossible. The closest Lindbergh came to revisiting Sparta was on February 13, 1928 when he flew the "Spirit of St Louis" low beneath some storm clouds, over Walsh, about eight miles southwest of Sparta, before turning west towards the Mississippi River.[9]

Lindbergh was on a non-stop flight from Havana, Cuba to St. Louis. He had completed a tour of Central America in the "Spirit of St. Louis". As Lindberg approached Florida, both of his compasses malfunctioned causing an unexpected delay in his flight. After reaching St. Louis,

Lindbergh flew the famous plane on a tour of St. Louis the next day. On April 30, 1928, Lindbergh flew the plane to Washington D.C. and donated it to the Smithsonian Institution. [10]

Today the original "Spirit of St Louis" is on display at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum on the mall in Washington D. C. The Missouri History Museum at Forest Park in St. Louis has an extensive collection of Lindbergh's uniforms, maps, awards and other related memorabilia from his transatlantic trip.

A replica of the "Spirit of St Louis" is on display at that museum. There are a number of other replicas of the "Spirit of St. Louis" displayed around the country. Replicas hang in the Lindbergh Terminal at Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, the EAA museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin and the Fantasy of Flight Museum in Polk City, Florida.

Lindbergh passed away August 26, 1974 at his home on Maui, Hawaii. He was buried on the grounds of the Palapala Ho'omau Church in Kipahulu, Maui.[11]

As airplanes increased in reliability, the next step was to prove just how long an airplane could remain in the air. This led to endurance flying, the next section.

Aircraft Endurance Flights

On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright succeeded in making the first powered flight of an aircraft at Kill Devil Hill near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Following that first successful powered flight, efforts were made to extend the distance that an airplane could travel without stopping. This required a reliable aircraft with a reliable engine to power the flight. As airplanes and their engines became reliable for extended periods of flight, pilots worked to find ways to take advantage of this extended capability. Early attempts were made to find the distance an airplane could travel without repair. One of the first limitations was the amount of fuel with which an aircraft could become airborne. To accomplish long term endurance flights, provisions were made to refuel the endurance aircraft while it was in flight. [34]

In 1918, the first attempts of refueling an airplane in flight were made by snaring a five-gallon gasoline can with a rope and grappling hook. These early experiments were conducted by Lieutenant Godfrey L. Cabot, a US Navy reserve pilot. Five-gallon gasoline cans were placed on a float in the Potomac River near Washington DC.

On November 21, 1921 at Long Beach, California, a wing walker named Wesley May, with a five-gallon can of gasoline strapped to his back, climbed from a flying Lincoln Standard to a flying Curtiss JN-4 "Jennie" airplane. Once aboard, he poured the gasoline into the fuel tank of the "Jennie". Although this was a publicity stunt, it was the first recorded air-to-air refueling.[35]

On April 16 & 17, 1923, Lieutenants John A. Macready and Oakley G. Kelly flew their Fokker T-2 for 36 hours, 4 minutes and 34 seconds over Wilbur Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. Their flight ended when they ran low on fuel.[36]

On April 20, 1923, two DeHavilland DH-4Bs performed the first in flight contact with a hose between the two airplanes. This test conducted under the direction of Major Henry H. "Hap:" Arnold, demonstrated the feasibility of transferring fuel in air-to-air refueling.

The first in-flight refueling contact between two airplanes took place on June 27, 1923 when two Boeing-built DeHavilland DH-4Bs of the United Sates Army Air Corps transferred fuel from one plane to the other over San Diego's Rockwell Field. The refueling airplane was flown by Lieutenants Virgil Hine and Frank W. Seifert. The refueled airplane was flown by Lieutenants Lowell Smith and John P. Richter. Although no fuel was transferred during this forty minute contact, the feat demonstrated that refueling an in-flight airplane could occur through gravity flow of fuel from one airplane to another.[37]

First Lieutenants Lowell H. Smith and John P. Richter established an aircraft endurance record of more than 37 hours from August 27, to August 28, 1923 in a DeHavilland DH-4B. The airplane was refueled by another DeHavilland DH-4B flown by Lieutenants Hine and Seifert. Fifteen refueling contacts were made during the endurance flight.[38]

On October 25, 1923 an Army Air Service DH-4B flew from Lamas, Washington to Tijuana, Mexico. Three air-to-air refuelings were required to complete the 1,280 mile flight.[39] As aircraft and aircraft engines became more robust, pilots began to push the envelope of the length of time they could remain airborne.

On April 4, 1924 three Douglas World Cruisers departed from Seattle, Washington for an around the world flight. After many stops, two of the airplanes landed back at Seattle on September 28, 1924. The airplanes were a modified version of the Douglas DT-2 Cloudster that were powered by Liberty engines. The trip covered a distance of 26,553 miles and required 175 days to complete. The refueling of the aircraft on this flight took place at the various locations around the globe where airplanes stopped. This flight did not prove the continuous flight endurance of the airplanes, but did demonstrate the distance airplanes could travel.[40]

There were many failed attempts to establish new and longer endurance flights. Following Charles A. Lindbergh's historic flight from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, New York to Le Bourget Aerodrome, Paris, France, the aviation community started thinking in terms of flying such long times or distances without having all of the fuel needed on board the aircraft. Lindbergh's airplane, the Ryan built "Spirit of St. Louis" airplane had been specially designed and built to carry all of the fuel needed for the Trans -Atlantic flight on board.[41]

On March 28, 1928, Eddie Stinson, owner of Stinson Aircraft, and Stinson's friend, George Halderman, took off from Jacksonville, Florida and remained in the air over Jacksonville, flying a 30 mile course for 53 hours and 37 minutes. The airplane they were flying was a Stinson SM-1 Detroiter registered as X1524. The airplane had been modified to house additional fuel tanks to permit the extended flight. The airplane was powered by a Wright Whirlwind J-5 engine rated at 300 HP. This was the same type of engine that Charles A. Lindbergh had chosen to power his airplane, the "Spirit of St. Louis". [42]

The race to establish flight endurance records began in earnest on January 1, 1929 when US Army Air Corps Major Carl Spaatz, First Lieutenant Harry A. Halverson, and Second Lieutenant Elwood Queseda began flying an Atlantic-Fokker C-2A, named "Question Mark" over Van Nuys, California. The "Question Mark" was refueled by a Douglas C-1 single engine

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transport flown by Captain Ross G. Hoyt and First Lieutenant Auby C. Strickland with Second Lieutenant Irwin A. Woodring operating the refueling hose. A second refueling airplane, also a Douglas C-1 was flown by First Lieutenant Odas Moon and Second Lieutenant Joseph G. Hopkins with Second Lieutenant Hopkins handling the refueling hose. The Fokker C-2A, named Question Mark remained aloft over Los Angeles, California for 150 hours, 40 minutes and 15 seconds. That flight was continued by transferring fuel from the refueling airplanes to the endurance plane, the "Question Mark". That endurance flight required 42 in-air refueling and resupply contacts. [43]

It should be noted that Capt. Ira Eaker became Major General Ira Eaker, Commanding General, of United States Eighth Air Force during World War II. Major Carl Spaatz became General Carl Spaatz, Chief of U. S. Army Strategic Air Forces directing US strategic bombing operations in Europe during World War II. [44]

May 19 to 26, 1929 -- James Kelly, an ex-cowboy with only a few hours flight time and Reginald Robbins, a railroad mechanic who had been flying since 1922, flew a well-used Ryan B-1 Brougham named "Fort Worth", and remained aloft over Fort Worth, Texas for 172 hours, 32 minutes and 2 seconds. They traveled about 12,900 miles. They were forced to land when a propeller blade cracked and the engine began vibrating severely.[45]

A week after that, back at Culver City, California, pilots Loren W. Mendell and Pete Reinhart broke that record with a flight of 246 hours and 43 minutes. They landed only when the tail group (the horizontal stabilizer and elevator and the vertical fin and rudder) of their Buhl Airsedan, "Angeleno", became fouled, requiring an immediate landing. [46]

On July 13, 1929, Dale "Red" Jackson and Forrest "Obie" O'Brine took off from Lambert Field in St. Louis in Curtiss Robin named "St. Louis Robin 1". The airplane had been built by the Curtiss-Robertson Airplane Manufacturing Company of Anglum, Missouri. The Curtiss Robin "St. Louis Robin 1" was powered by new Curtiss Challenger six-cylinder, air cooled, radial engine. The endurance flight was an opportunity to demonstrate the improved reliability of the Challenger engine. A catwalk from the cabin to the engine had been added to each side of the fuselage on the "St. Louis 1" to enable maintenance work on the engine while

the airplane was in the air. The cabin of the "St. Louis Robin 1" had been lengthened and access for capturing the refueling hose was made through the roof of the cabin to aid in refueling the airplane.

A second Curtiss Robin airplane was modified to serve as the refueling airplane. Both airplanes had an extra 125 gallon fuel tank installed in the cabin. The refueling airplane was equipped with a transparent covering located on the bottom and side around the pilot's seat on the fuselage. The refueling airplane also carried a 40 foot long 1½ inch hose to transfer fuel to the endurance airplane. Ray Wassall, Chief Test Pilot for Curtiss- Robertson, was chosen to pilot the refueling airplane. Ray Wassall had taken time off his recently acquired job as Aviation Field Operations Manager at Curtiss-Steinberg Airport, which was still under construction. Percival V. "Shorty" Chaffee, a line mechanic, assisted Wassall in making contact and operating the hose to transfer fuel to the endurance airplane.

Oil was transferred to "St. Louis Robin 1" in cans loaded into canvas sacks, which were about three feet in length and six inches in diameter. The sacks were weighted with 20 to 25 lbs of lead shot to stabilize the transfer. The "St. Louis Robin 1" consumed about 10 gallons of oil per day. The same procedure was used to transfer food, water, and messages to the endurance airplane. Tools, such as a valve spring compression too were transferred in the same manner. The valve spring compression tool permitted spark plugs in the two lower cylinders of the radial engine to be changed. Dale Jackson severely burned his hands performing spark plug maintenance. The endurance flight of "St. Louis Robin 1" was planned to remain in the air for 500 hours. That would be more than double the flight by Mendell and Reinhart in their Buhl Airsedan named "Angeleno". The crash of their close friend George Lea Lambert, son of Albert Bond Lambert, caused William Robertson to order "St. Louis Robin 1" to land so the crews could attend Lambert's funeral services.

On July 30, 1929, "St. Louis Robin 1" landed at Lambert Field. Dale Jackson and Forrest O'Brine had remained in the air for 420 hours, 21 minutes and 30 seconds, a new World's Flight Endurance Record.[47]

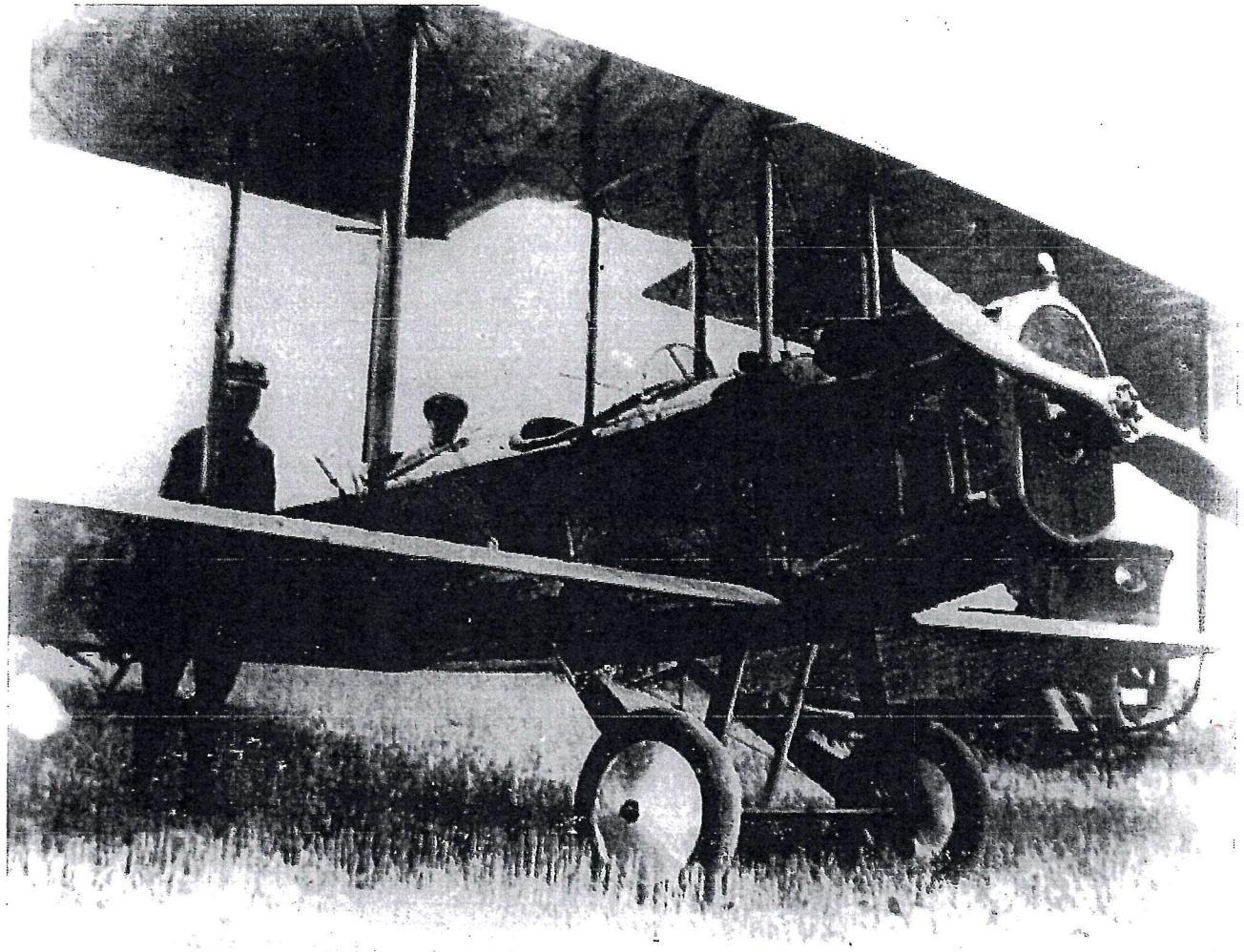
An article in the August 15, 1929 issue of the *Sparta News Plaindealer* reported that John Hunter was to pilot the refueling airplane "Big Ben" , a Stinson SM-1 Detroiter in an effort to set a new World Flight Endurance Record. The endurance airplane was also a Stinson SM-1 Detroiter named "Chicago We Will" owned by the Chicago We Will Corporation. That attempt to set a new endurance record failed.

In the fall of 1929, brothers, John and Kenneth Hunter, again attempted to break the record set by Jackson and O'Brine. They started their attempt at 6:52 a.m. on September 30, 1929 in the Stinson Detroiter, named "Chicago We Will". They remained in the air for eleven days but were forced to discontinue their flight when a heavy fog made it impossible for the refueling plane to locate and refuel the endurance plane. The endurance plane was originally sold to Central Airways and had been used for Chicago to Detroit taxi service.

John and Kenneth Hunter, although unsuccessful in their attempt to set a new World Flight Endurance Record in 1929, would make another attempt as soon as the weather improved. That attempt is described in detail in the next section.

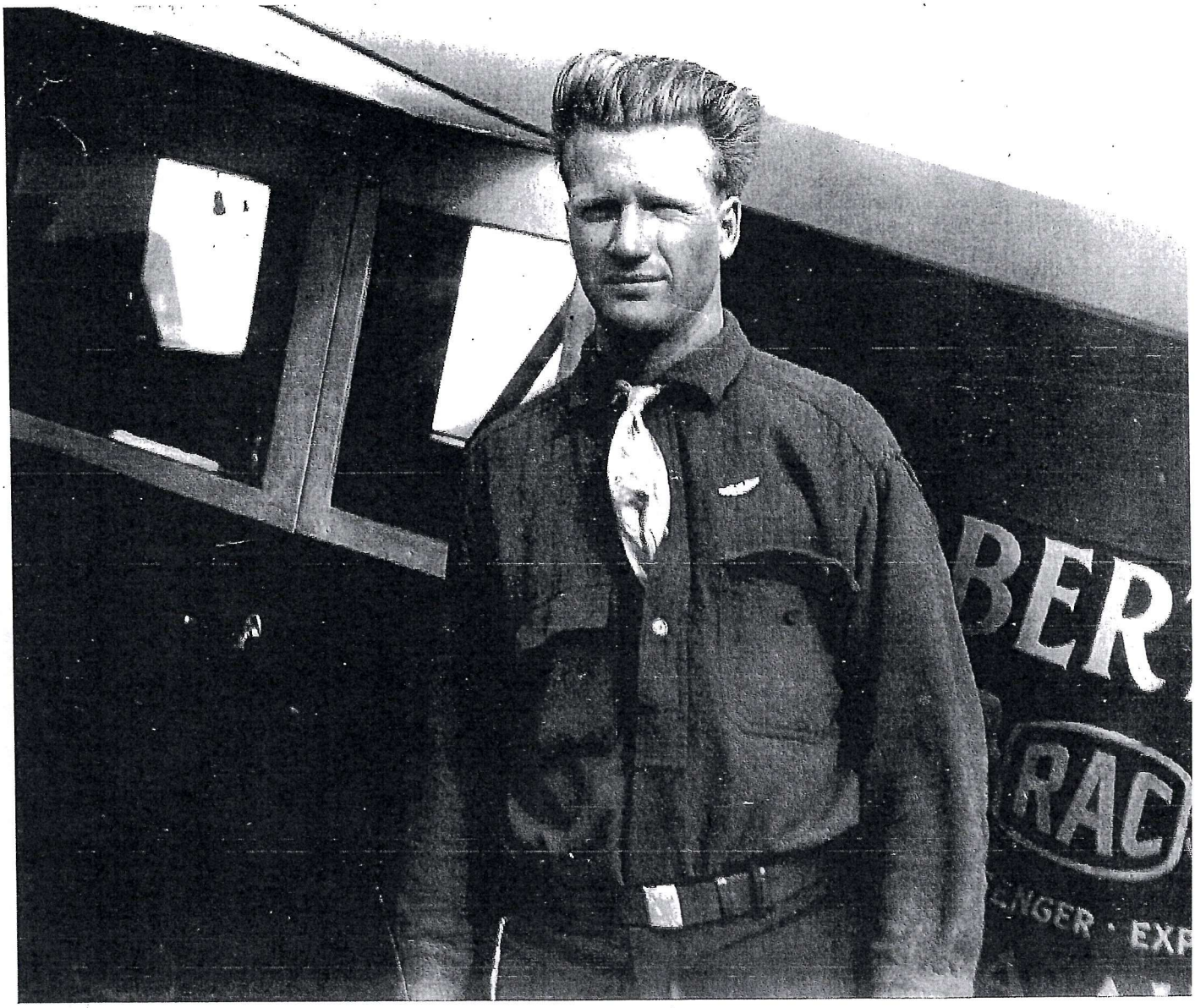
Photo courtesy of Herschel Hunter

This is the Hunter home on the northwest corner of Dickey and McClurken streets in Sparta. This is the home that the Hunters eventually settled in after moving to Sparta from the farm. This building no longer exists. It was demolished about 1968.



This picture shows Walter Hunter sitting in the rear cockpit with Albert Hunter standing beside the airplane. This is the first airplane owned by the Hunter brothers. This airplane is now at the National Air and Space Musuem. It is a Lincoln Standard J-1 Turnabout. The engine in the airplane is a 150 hp Hispano-Suiza V8 engine. The Hunter brothers purchased this airplane from Robertson Aircraft Corporation at Lambert Airfield at Anglum, Missouri.

Photo courtesy of Herschel Hunter

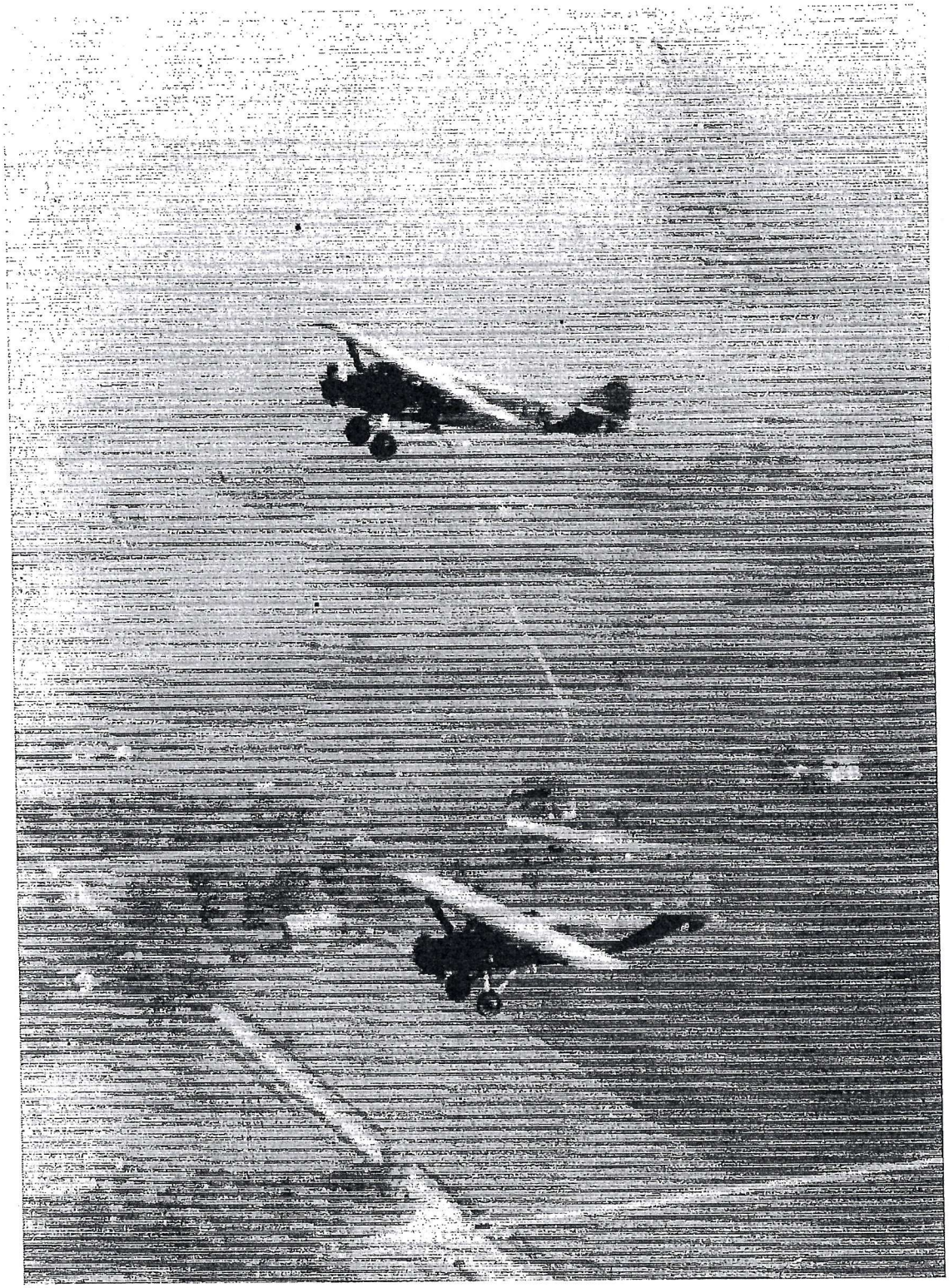


Walter Hunter standing beside one of Robertson Aircraft's Curtiss Robin airplanes.

Photo Courtesy Herschel Hunter

Pictured left to right are Walter, John, Kenneth, and Albert Hunter in 1930

Photo courtesy Herschel Hunter

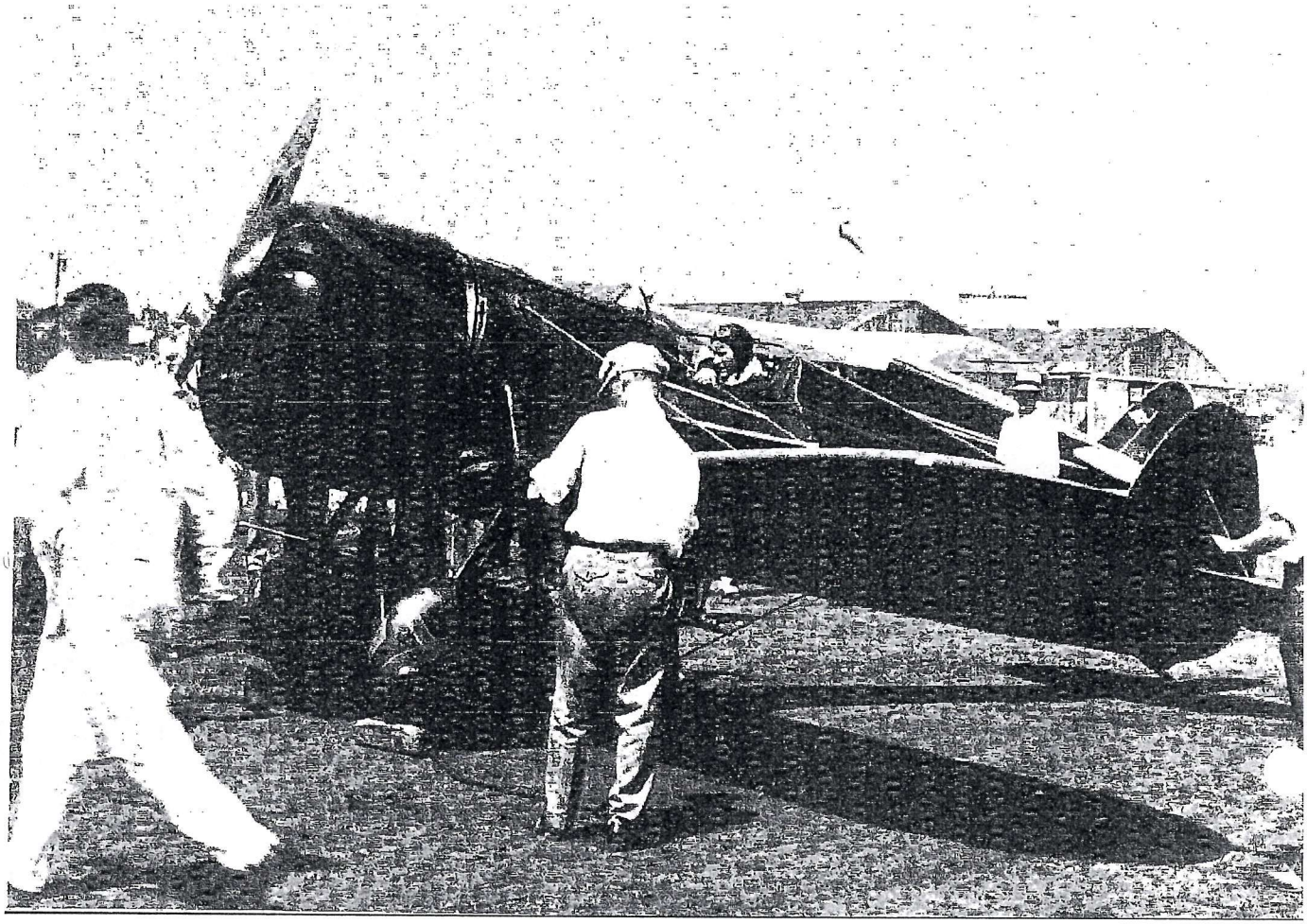


This picture shows Big Ben's refueling hose just breaking contact with the "City of Chicago" after one of the refueling contacts during the endurance flight. *Photo courtesy of Herschel Hunter*

Walter, Albert, Herb Bud, and Irene load cans of oil and food containers into a weighted canvas sleeve that was lowered to the endurance airplane during a refueling contact. *Photo courtesy of Herschel Hunter*

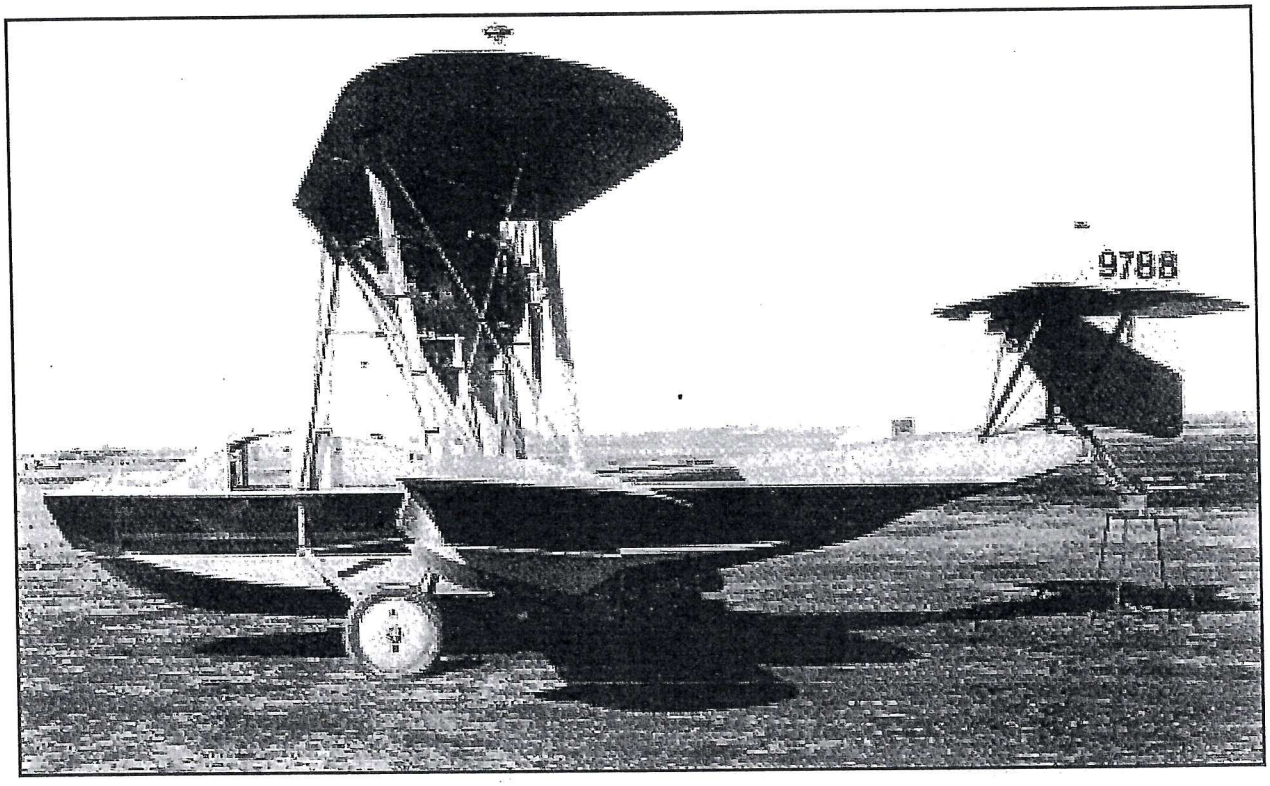
This picture was taken inside the hanger at Sky Harbor Airport immediately following the Record Endurance Flight From left to right in the picture are: Gladys Hodam, (fiancé of Walter), Walter, Kenneth, John, Irene, (their sister), Pearl, (Albert's wife), Albert, and Ida Jane, (Mother of the Hunters), The two gentlemen at the right are not identified.

Photo courtesy of Herschel Hunter

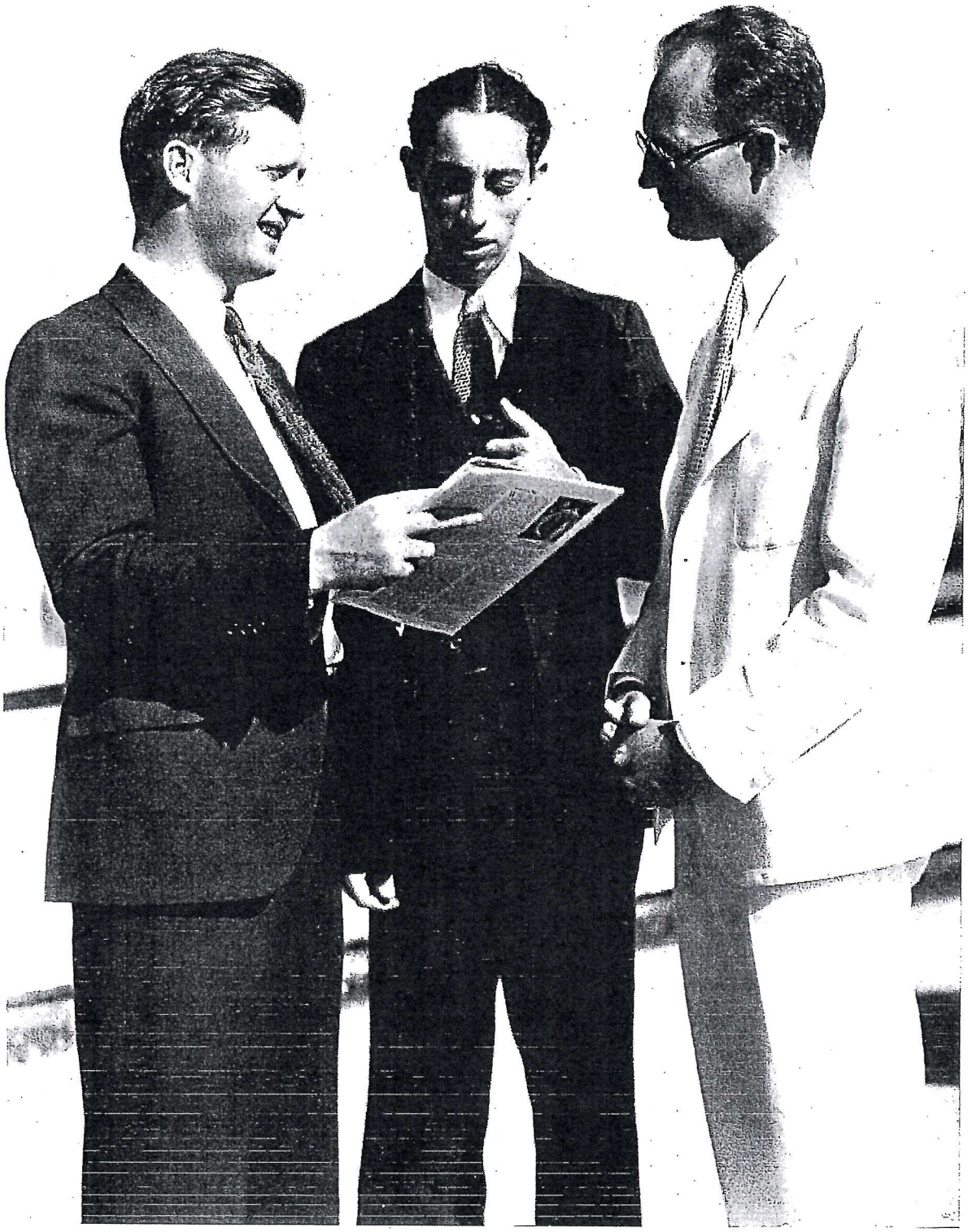


This picture, taken at Curtiss-Steinberg Airport in East St. Louis, is Walter Hunter in the cockpit of his rebuilt Travel Air mystery Ship NR614K that he entered in the 1931 Bendix Trophy Race of the National Air Races. The person standing in front of the left wing is Herbert Bud.

Photo Courtesy Herschel Hunter

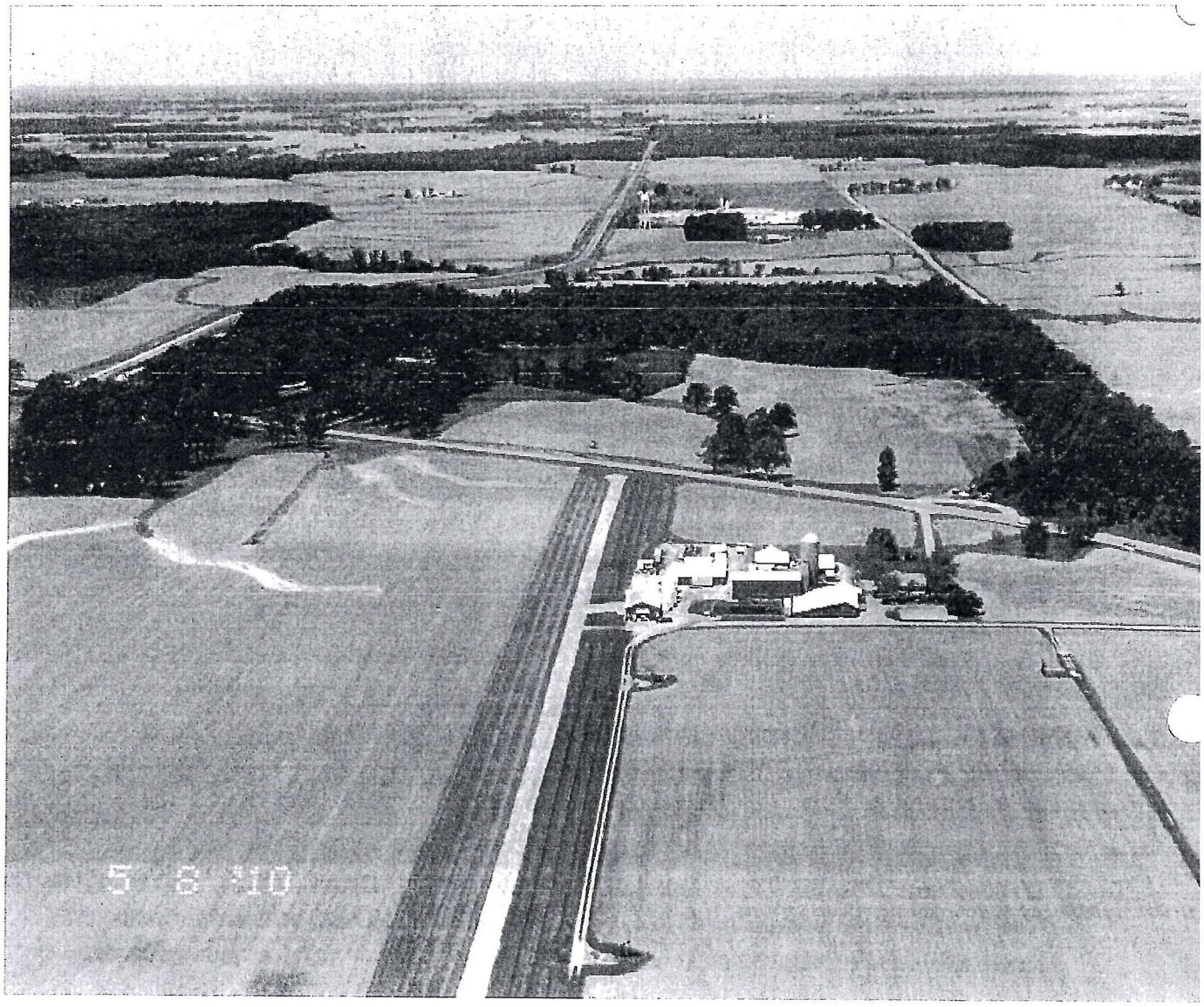


This is a picture of an Ireland Neptune 1B amphibious airplane, the type of airplane that John Hunter was flying when he landed at Rosedale, Mississippi on June 26, 1932. On Monday morning, June 27, John started the engine of his airplane, then crawled out of the cockpit to walk back and intie the tail of the airplane from the dock. The whirling propeller was invisible when John walked into its spinning path, resulting in his death.



Kenneth, Gordon Israel, and an unidentified person discuss a racing airplane design during the summer of 1932 *Photo courtesy Herschel Hunter*

Walter Hunter flew this DC-3 American Airlines Flagship "Detroit" (NC17334) on a round trip New York to Palm Springs on May 4, 1941. The aircraft has been restored by a non-profit foundation and is displayed at air shows around the country *Photo courtesy of author*



This is a picture of the farm north of Sparta that Albert Hunter purchased. Today it is the home of his son, Herschel Hunter

Photo courtesy of author

The Hunter Brothers' Endurance Flight

The Hunter brothers are best known for the flight endurance record in an airplane that they set on July 4, 1930. That record of 553 hours, 41 minutes and 30 seconds was made in a used Stinson SM-1 Detroiter named the "City of Chicago".

On June 4, 1930, John Hunter of Sparta, Illinois purchased a Stinson SM-1 Detroiter that had been owned by the Chicago We Will Corporation from L. W. Schuetz for $2,628.00. This airplane was the same airplane that John and Kenneth Hunter had flown in October, 1929 in an attempt to set an endurance record. The Stinson SM-1 Detroiter had two 45-gallon fuel tanks in each wing plus a 132-gallon fuel tank inside the cabin. The plane was equipped with a 300 HP Wright J-6 Whirlwind engine. Sky Harbor Airport at Northbrook, Illinois, was chosen as the location of the endurance flight record attempt. The airplane was re-inspected at Sky Harbor Airport. The fuel system was found to be in good shape and approved for an endurance flight attempt. The airplane was re-named "City of Chicago"[1]

Sky Harbor Airport, the Airport of Tomorrow, was built by the North Shore Airport Company, a division of United Aviation Corporation. It was intended to serve as a base for private aircraft, airliners, and sightseeing aircraft. The airport began business in 1929. A feature of the airport was a large arch-roof hanger.[2]

For almost the entire day on June 11, 1930, the Hunter brothers were busy with preparations for the endurance flight. At about 3:00 p.m. the "City of Chicago" was pushed onto the tarmac. The big Wright J-6 engine was started and closely checked for proper operation. After final tuning of the engine, John and Kenneth returned to the hanger and changed into fresh clothes. Albert and Walter Hunter continued to prepare the "City of Chicago" for flight. After changing clothes, John and Kenneth again took their positions in the cockpit of the airplane. They revved the engine and leaned out to wave that the chocks be pulled. The "City of Chicago" taxied to the end of the runway. The throttle was increased; the big Wright J-6 engine responded, and the "City of Chicago" started down the runway and at 4:40 p.m. lifted into the sky. The attempt to set a new flight endurance record was under way.

Typical of the Hunter brothers, no advance notice of the endurance attempt was made. The endurance plane, piloted by John and Kenneth was refueled by another Stinson SM-1 Detroiter that was flown by brothers Albert and Walter Hunter. That plane was named "Big Ben". It was powered by a Wright Whirlwind J-5-AB engine. "Big Ben" was owned by Big Ben Air Service of Chicago. "Big Ben" had the seats removed and a 110 gallon gas tank had been installed in their place. The baggage compartment contained a loudspeaker. [3] The loudspeaker was used by Albert and Walter to communicate to the endurance airplane.

An article in the *Chicago Daily News* on June 13, first mentioned the attempted endurance flight. Although the flight was not publicized, support of the flight had been well-planned. As the flight progressed over the Sky Harbor Airport, refueling contacts were made about every six hours. At each contact with the "City of Chicago" by "Big Ben", gasoline, oil, food, and freshly cleaned clothes were lowered to John and Kenneth in the endurance plane. The gasoline was transferred to the "City of Chicago" through a hose dropped from "Big Ben". Oil, food, and clothes were placed in a weighted canvas sleeve and lowered from "Big Ben" to the endurance airplane during the fuel transfer. John and Kenneth's mother, Ida Jane Hunter and their sister Irene did their laundry and prepared their meals. John and Kenneth took turns at the controls of the "City of Chicago" and sleeping. On occasions, Kenneth would leave the cabin and scoot along a catwalk to the engine in the nose of the airplane. There, he would tighten bolts or perform needed maintenance on the Wright J-6 engine.

The experience of the 1929 attempt motivated John to ask brothers Albert and Walter to fly "Big Ben", the refueling plane, to insure that nothing would prevent refueling the "City of Chicago". Albert had just completed planting the crops on the farm and, Walter had taken leave from Universal Airways. The Hunters hired a manager to help them with the business aspects of the endurance flight. After more than a week, refueling contacts were increased to about every three hours because a leak in one of the endurance plane's fuel tanks reduced the onboard fuel capacity of the "City of Chicago". [4]

In order for the endurance flight to be certified, the National Aeronautical Association required the endurance airplane to carry a sealed barograph and to pass over the airport every 15

minutes to be observed by an official observer on the ground. This required the flight to either circle the airport or fly a figure eight pattern over the airport.[5] An official observer on the ground kept a certified log of each observation of the endurance airplane.

At 2:40 a.m. on June 20, John was flying the "City of Chicago" while Kenneth was dozing in the co-pilot's seat. The Wright J-6 Whirlwind engine was running rough. John switched the magneto switch from "Both" to "R" position. The engine did not change in tone or beat. John flipped the magneto switch to "L" position; the Wright J-6 engine began to cough and sputter, awaking Kenneth. The airplane had two magnetos; each magneto powered one of the two spark plugs in each cylinder of the Wright J-6 radial engine. John flipped the magneto switch back to the "Both" position and instructed Kenneth to take control of the airplane, telling Kenneth that the magneto on John's side of the airplane was bad. After Kenneth took control of the "City of Chicago", John opened the cabin door, stepped out onto the six inch wide steel catwalk along the left nose of the airplane, and worked his way forward. John carried tools in one pocket and magneto parts in his other pocket. Kenneth flew the airplane while John worked at the rear case of the engine. Suddenly, the engine smoothed out and the tachometer showed a 50 rpm increase in engine speed. Kenneth smiled and decreased the engine throttle as John opened the cabin door, stepped back into the cabin of the airplane, and resumed his seat in the cockpit. John gave the o.k. sign to Kenneth. Now, the "City of Chicago" had been in the air for about 200 hours. During that time each brother made numerous trips along the catwalk on their side to service the engine. During the refueling operation of the endurance airplane, Kenneth stood up in the open rear hatch, ignoring the blast from the propeller and grabbed the refueling hose that hung down from "Big Ben". Kenneth placed the nozzle into the fuel tank opening and fresh fuel began flowing from "Big Ben". Kenneth would also capture the canvas sleeve of oil, clothes and food when it was lowered from "Big Ben". [6]

Communication between the "City of Chicago" and their support team on the airfield was accomplished by dropping notes. The notes were tied to a weight to keep the note from being carried away by the wind. One note from John and Kenneth to their sister, Irene, complained that the food they were receiving was not "he-man enough". The note continued: "Give us more hot dogs and hard boiled eggs and less of that fancy fixed duck and chicken".[7]

On June 18, Kenneth's twenty second birthday passed without much celebration in the cramped quarters of the airplane. The "City of Chicago" flew on as each hour slowly moved along. By June 23, their twelfth day in the air, both John and Kenneth were tired and dirty and had not shaved since they had taken off. Conversation between the brothers was limited to only what was absolutely essential. On June 26, Kenneth fell asleep while flying the airplane. He awoke to find the airplane in a steep turning dive. Suddenly alert, he regained control of the airplane and finished his turn at the controls that day with his reddened-eyes very wide awake.

That night, the "City of Chicago" was, for the first time, refueled in the dark by "Big Ben". The refueling process was aided by a flashlight tied to the refueling nozzle to help Kenneth locate the nozzle in the dark. One wing tank sprung a leak the next afternoon. After that, night refuelings became a necessary routine because of the further reduced on-board fuel capacity.

The next afternoon, strong winds blew down along Lake Michigan from the north. The "City of Chicago", buffeted by the winds, increased and deceased altitude in response. This made the refueling operation a bit of a challenge. That night the oil tank became pressurized because the access plug had been installed too tightly. When the plug was removed, the pressure was relieved and oil was forced out into the faces of Kenneth and John. They both removed their oil-soaked clothes and threw them overboard. In addition, the cabin, their bedding, and their food were all soaked with engine oil.

About this time, Kenneth developed a toothache. John dropped a note asking that a dentist be lowered into the "City of Chicago" or that Kenneth be lifted up to "Big Ben" and returned after his tooth had been pulled. John also requested some clothes, as it was a bit cold sitting in their underwear. Kenneth added a line to the note asking who the other guy was in the airplane flying beside the "City of Chicago" the previous evening.

The "other guy" Kenneth asked about was Will Rogers. Rogers, an avid aviation buff, had come to Sky Harbor Airport to cheer the Hunter Brothers on during their endurance attempt. Initially an effort had been made to drop a microphone to the "City of Chicago" so a two-way radio conversation could take place between Will Rogers and the endurance pilots. The high

winds prevented that from occurring so Rogers simply waved his best wishes to John and Kenneth from the airplane flying alongside.

As the endurance flight continued towards the record set by Dale Jackson and Forrest O'Brine, the flight of the "City of Chicago" began attracting more and more attention from the public. Daily articles in the Chicago newspapers caused large crowds to visit Sky Harbor Airport to witness the event. A number of citizens from Sparta made the long trip north to Sky Harbor Airport to cheer the Hunter brothers on toward setting a new endurance record.

On Sunday, June 29, 1930, the "City of Chicago" passed the Jackson-O'Brine Flight Endurance Record; John dropped the endurance plane low over Sky Harbor Airport with Kenneth standing on the catwalk waving to the crowd gathered at the airport below. That crowd was estimated to be about 75,000 people. Officials at Sky Harbor Airport offered to get a doctor for their mother, Mrs. Ida Hunter, who seemed a bit faint as she watched these events. Albert's response was, "Aw shucks, get her a chair and let her sit down. She's seen things like this before."

Later, after exceeding the Jackson-O'Brine Endurance Record, the "City of Chicago" appeared to lose control and started toward the ground. Albert and Walter, concerned about their brothers, quickly took off in "Big Ben" to determine why the "City of Chicago" was out of control. The "City of Chicago" regained control so Albert and Walter returned to the airport and landed "Big Ben". Soon a note in Kenneth's handwriting was dropped saying: "John and I just had one hell of a fight. John wants to come down Thanksgiving, but I insisted that we stay up until Christmas. It was a draw, so we compromised, and we won't be down until December 10, the last day of quail season."[8]

A handwritten letter was delivered to Walter Hunter at Sky Harbor Airport. The letter was from Major William D. Robertson, President of Curtiss Robertson Manufacturing Company. The note was addressed to John and Kenneth Hunter. It read:" Congratulations on your wonderful accomplishment. Your courage and endurance has eclipsed our efforts and I am proud of you. I know what you and your associates have been through; therefore, I can appreciate your hard work probably more than anyone else, but it has its reward. You now hold

the world's endurance record. My only suggestion at this time is to be exceedingly careful and at the first sign of weakness, please make your decision quickly and don't mar your wonderful achievement." This note was indeed a wonderful gesture from the manufacturer of the airplane that previously held the endurance record that John and Kenneth Hunter just surpassed.

On June 29, 1930 at 3:45 P.M., Albert, Irene, and Mrs. Ida Hunter were interviewed by WBBM radio station in Chicago. Mrs. Ida Hunter was "stage struck" by the interview and could only say "Hello John, Hello Kenneth, we're proud of you, good luck. This is mother." However, Irene's schoolroom training served her well. She was able to respond to the interview with poise. After Albert's turn at the microphone, the announcer said, "They could fly better than they could talk".[9]

On June 30, the "City of Chicago's" storage battery failed. This made it impossible to turn on the navigation lights. The refueling operation that night was made in total darkness. The next morning, a new battery was lowered to the "City of Chicago". On July 1, Kenneth made another trip along the narrow catwalk to tighten a loose engine mount. Later, John repaired a magneto and replaced a frayed spark plug wire. That evening, Kenneth climbed out onto the top of the fuselage of the "City of Chicago" and while hanging onto a rope slid back to the tail of the airplane to remove bits of paper and string that had become tangled in the rudder. Two trips were necessary to free the operation of the rudder. These two trips were considered the most hazardous trips Kenneth made outside the cabin during the entire endurance flight.

A special equipped radio ship from Chanute Field in Rantoul, Illinois was flown to Sky Harbor Airport by Army Lt. E. L. Moon. Arrangements were made to drop a microphone to the "City of Chicago" so that broadcasts at 12:00 noon and 6:00 P.M could be made daily by John and Kenneth. On July 2, attorney Richard J. Flannigan, representing five stockholders of the Chicago We Will Corporation, filed suit in court asking for a share of any earnings the Hunter brothers might receive. Judge Michael Feinberg promptly held court for the first time in history in the cabin of a huge airplane flying along side the "City of Chicago". The Judge refused to issue a court order to force John and Kenneth to land the "City of Chicago". The judge also postponed further action "until such time as the flight shall finish." A somewhat bewildered

Deputy Sheriff was to serve a court order on the endurance pilots. When questioned by reporters, who were not sympathetic about the complaints, the deputy responded that John and Kenneth could fly as long as they wanted to. The deputy said that he did all of his work on the ground. Later, when the case was scheduled to be heard in court, the suit was withdrawn.

The Chicago City Council listened with enthusiasm as Chicago's 45th Ward Alderman William Feingenbutz read a resolution praising the Hunter brothers' Endurance Flight. Winnetka, Illinois convened its Lions Club and approved honorary membership and a free lunch for the Hunters. In the afternoon, the Hunters received a wire from their friend, Charles A. Lindbergh congratulating the Hunters on their endurance flight success.

On July 3 an oil line on the "City of Chicago" broke. A note requesting material and tools was dropped, and the requested items were carried to the endurance airplane by "Big Ben". Kenneth, oil soaked, quickly made the repairs from the narrow catwalk. A bit later, another note was dropped requesting an engine bolt and some tools. Kenneth had discovered a structural failure. As "Big Ben" flew nearby, Kenneth replaced the broken bolt. Fuel consumption had suddenly increased. A note was dropped requesting more fuel. Just after 9:00 P. M., the requested fuel was delivered.

The oil pump in the Wright J-6 Whirlwind engine took suction from the oil tank and pumped the oil through an oil screen to the engine components. When the oil screen became clogged, the oil pump could not supply oil to the engine, so the oil was forced back into the oil tank. The oil being forced back into the oil tank caused the tank to become pressurized. When the plug in the oil tank was opened so more oil could be poured into the tank, the pressure caused oil to be forced out into the airplane cabin, into the faces of John and Kenneth

On July 4, slightly past 6:00 o'clock in the evening, the engine oil gauge broke and the temperature of the Wright J-6 engine had begun to increase. John and Kenneth decided to land the airplane before the motor failed due to overheating and lack of oil. John turned the airplane and headed toward the runway at Sky Harbor Airport. At 6:21, p.m. on July 4, 1930, brothers John and Kenneth Hunter landed the "City of Chicago" after having been airborne for 553 hours,

41 minutes and 30 seconds, establishing a new World Flight Endurance Record. As reported, John and Kenneth had been experiencing difficulties all day.

As the "City of Chicago" touched down and taxied down the runway, the crowd rushed toward the airplane. John, recalling Lindbergh's experience in Paris, taxied the plane around the crowd and into the hanger. Then the Big Wright Whirlwind J-6 engine became silent. Inside the hanger at Sky Harbor Airport, John and Kenneth were greeted by Spartans, Lee F. Campbell, Will Keigley, Secretary of the Sparta Chamber of Commerce, Norris R. Lessley and Sparta Mayor W. W. Lynn. After exiting the "City of Chicago", John and Kenneth were rushed to the microphones of the national radio networks. At the microphones, John and Kenneth reported that they were tired, but could have stayed in the air for several more days had the oil screen in the motor lubrication system not become plugged. Following the radio broadcast, the Hunter family, including all four brothers, their mother, their sister Irene and Albert's family, were taken by a long automobile procession to the "House on the Roof" at the Hotel Sherman in downtown Chicago. There they checked into the hotel as guests of the hotel management.

Dale "Red" Jackson had approached Albert Hunter in Chicago and asked for a payment of some amount of money to keep him (Jackson) from going out and exceeding the newly set World Flight Endurance Record. Albert was in favor of making a payment, but John was adamantly opposed to making any payment. No payment was made.

The Hunters earned a considerable profit as a result on their new World Flight Endurance Record. They received $10,000 from Deep Rock Oil Company and $7,000 from a malt extract company that sponsored their radio broadcasts during the endurance flight. The Curtiss-Wright Company also gave the Hunters a new J-6 Wright Whirlwind engine for the "City of Chicago". Numerous gifts were also presented to the Hunters by local Sparta businesses.[10] After the endurance flight, on July 14, 1930, the Stinson SM-1 Detroiter "Big Ben" was sold to John Hunter for $4,600.00.[11]

The Hunter brothers' World Flight Endurance Record was reported all around the world. Many news accounts reported that Albert was the only member of the Hunter family who was married. This was quite possibly amusing to John Hunter, who on May 7, 1929 married Miss

Laura McCarey of Sparta before a Justice of the Peace in St. Charles, Missouri. Laura was teaching school at the time and chose to keep her marriage a secret. At the time, many schools required that teachers not be married.

The July 7, 1930 issue of *Time* magazine had an article titled:" Flights & Flyers" that reported on Hunter brothers' endurance flight. The July 8, 1930 issue of the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* featured a front-page article about Sparta, the Hunter brothers and the endurance flight. Pictures and news of the endurance flight were published in the *New York Times* newspaper.[12]

As a result of their record-setting endurance flight, the Hunters signed a contract to be featured in a United Artists Hollywood film produced by Howard Hughes and Sid Grauman.[13] This invitation to make a movie about their endurance flight was most likely the result of Will Rogers' enthusiasm about their record flight. On July 17, 1930 the Hunters flew from Chicago to St. Louis and then departed for Hollywood the next day. The trip to Hollywood took a total of three days. The trip was made in three airplanes, the "City of Chicago", "Big Ben", and Walter Hunter's Travel Air 4000. Not all three airplanes followed the same route. From St. Louis Kenneth flew "Big Ben" to Wichita Falls, Texas, on July 18. On July 19, Kenneth flew "Big Ben" from Wichita Falls to Rockwell Field in San Diego, California and then to Davis Monthan Airfield in Tucson, Arizona. On July 20, Kenneth flew Walter's Travel Air 4000 from Tucson to Riverside, California. On July 21, Kenneth flew Walter's Travel Air 4000 from Riverside to Los Angeles. All three airplanes met at Tucson, Riverside, and Los Angles. At each stop, they were the attraction of many visitors who came out to see the World Endurance Flight record holders.

While in Hollywood, the Hunters met a number of well-known actors such as Johnny Mac Brown and Lionel West (Chief Happy Heart); both had their picture taken with the Hunters and then autographed the pictures for the Hunters. After the filming for the movie was completed, the Hunters headed home to Sparta, Illinois. Irene wanted to see some of the western part of the United States so Kenneth flew "Big Ben" from Los Angles to Las Vegas and then on to Salt Lake City, Nevada on August 7, 1930. On August 8, Kenneth flew "Big Ben" from Salt Lake City to Chippewa County, Minnesota and then to Cherokee, Iowa. On August 9, Kenneth

flew "Big Ben" from Cherokee to Cheyenne, Wyoming. On August 10, Kenneth flew "Big Ben" from Cheyenne to North Platte, Nebraska. On August 11, Kenneth flew Walter's Travel Air 4000 from North Platte to Yankton, South Dakota. On August 12, Kenneth departed Yankton in Walter's Travel Air 4000 and arrived in Omaha, Nebraska. The next day Kenneth flew the Travel Air from Omaha to St. Louis. On August 14, Kenneth returned to Sparta in the Travel Air 4000. At each stop, the Hunters and their airplane became the attraction for the local citizens to see. The fact that John and Kenneth had set a new World Flight Endurance Record in the aircraft, attracted interest from many local citizens wherever they stopped.

After returning from Hollywood, the Hunters learned that on August 17, 1930 Dale Jackson and Forrest O'Brine claimed that they had exceeded the endurance record set by John and Kenneth Hunter. Jackson and O'Brine claimed that the new endurance record was now 647 hours and 28 minutes.[14] Jackson and O'Brine's claim probably prevented Hollywood from releasing the movie that the Hunters just completed filming. In addition, that claim cost the Hunters about $100,000.00. Contracts that would have paid at least that amount would have been signed had the Jackson O'Brine flight been delayed for several months. The Hunters issued a statement wishing the St. Louis boys well and stating that they would make no further attempts at setting a new endurance record during 1930. The Hunter brothers did not wish to take the spotlight away from Jackson and O'Brine before they had an opportunity to cash in on their fame. [15] That is an amazing position the Hunter brothers chose to take, this was at the height of the Great Depression. Jackson and O'Brine set out to surpass the Hunter's endurance record immediately without considering what that would do to the Hunter brothers. Because of the Jackson – O'Brine claim, the Hunters were never paid for the film that they were to have been featured in.

John Hunter flew the "City of Chicago" on Wednesday, December 24, 1930 on a very special mission. Miller Stephenson and Miss Ruth Rankin were married in the "City of Chicago" by Rev. J. C. Murdoch, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church as the plane circled over Sparta. Witnesses to the ceremony were John Hunter, pilot, and Wallace Stephenson, cousin of the groom. As soon as the ceremony was completed, announcements of the wedding were dropped as the airplane flew over downtown Sparta. The airplane then landed at Albert

Hunter's farm landing strip north of Sparta.[16] The reason that Ruth Rankin and Miller Stephenson chose to get married in an airplane was that their two families could not agree on a place or a minister to conduct the wedding ceremony. Ruth's father had been a business manager for the Hunter brothers, so he arranged for Ruth and Miller to get married in one of the Hunter brothers' airplanes.

John and Kenneth Hunter were invited to a banquet in Washington D.C. on February 4, 1931, as guests of the National Aeronautical Society. At that banquet, John and Kenneth learned that they still held the World's Flight Endurance Record of 553 hours, 41 minutes and 30 seconds. The National Aeronautical Society did not recognize the Jackson-O'Brine claim. The reason given was because the formal report of the Jackson-O'Brine flight had not been submitted properly.[17] Around St. Louis, it was reported that Jackson and O'Brine had secretly landed one evening on a farm in St. Louis County and made repairs to their airplane during their claimed endurance flight.

The Hunter Brother's Flight Endurance Record remained unsurpassed until July 1, 1935, when Fred and Algene Key landed their Curtiss Robin airplane named "Ole Miss" at Key Field in Meridian, Mississippi after remaining in the air for 653 hours and 34 minutes. Their airplane was powered by a Wright Whirlwind J-65-E engine. "Ole Miss" was refueled by another Curtiss Robin airplane flown by Bill Ward and James Keeton. Kenneth Hunter wrote his congratulations to the Key Brothers; "Days without sleep, a month without fresh clothes or a good meal, the pungent odor of gasoline and the continuous, deafening roar of the engine – this was the routine of endurance flying." Kenneth Hunter, Endurance Pilot.[18]

In December 1936, Kenneth announced that he and Albert were considering attempting to set a new world flight endurance record if sponsors could be found. The plan was to base the attempt at Curtiss-Steinberg Airport in East St. Louis, Illinois, starting by June 8, 1937. The effort would be made by a Hunter brothers' team with Major Ray Wassall, Curtiss-Steinberg Airport manager, serving as director of the ground crew. The plan was to use a six-seat airplane owned by the Southern Air Service Company of Memphis, Tennessee. They planned to remove all but one of the six seats from the airplane for the endurance flight. The endurance flight

attempt was contingent on raising at least $5,000. Kenneth directed an endurance flight attempt by two young ladies in Oklahoma two years prior. [19] In April 1937, Kenneth announced that he had given up his plan to set a new world flight endurance record. He said he had gained enough financial backing, but the necessary radio broadcast arrangements had not been completed. [20]

In 1955, the Key Brother's Curtiss Robin "Ole Miss" was donated to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.[21]

Since his brothers were the holders of a new World Flight Endurance Record, Walter must have felt he needed to do something to bring his name to prominence in the aviation field. Walter entered the 1931 Bendix Trophy Race of the National Air Races, the next chapter.

1931 Bendix Trophy Race

Walter Hunter decided to add his name to the list of significant aviation accomplishments, so he entered the 1931 Bendix Trophy Race. The Bendix Trophy Race was a speed dash from United Airport in Burbank, California to Cleveland Municipal Airport in Cleveland, Ohio. The race was open to any aircraft that could fly the distance of 2043 miles either non-stop or with stops for refueling. The only rule was that the aircraft must arrive at Cleveland before 6 PM the same day, the opening day of the National Air Races. A total prize of $15,000 was sponsored by Vincent Bendix, an American inventor and industrialist. [22] Bendix founded the Bendix Corporation of Chicago in 1907 to manufacture automobiles. After the company failed, Bendix invented and patented the Bendix drive that is in use today on automobile starters. In 1923, Bendix founded the Bendix Brake Company, and in 1929 started the Bendix Aviation Corporation.[23] Bendix's purpose in sponsoring the race was to create interest in building faster, more reliable and durable aircraft.[24]

There were eight entries for the first Bendix Trophy Race in 1931: James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle flying a Laird Super Solution; Harold Johnson flying a Lockheed Orion; Beeler Blevins flying a Lockheed Orion; Ira Eaker flying a Lockheed Altair; Art Goebel flying a Lockheed Vega; James Hall Flying a Lockheed Altair; Louis Reichers flying a Lockheed Altair; and Walter Hunter flying a Travel Air Model R.[25]

Doolittle considered Walter Hunter his primary competition. Jimmy Doolittle had planned to fly a Travel Air Model R in the Bendix Trophy Race, so he was well acquainted with the Travel Air Model R.[26]

Walter Hunter purchased Travel Air Model R (NR614K), from the Curtiss Wright Exhibition Company on December 22, 1930. That aircraft, flown by Doug Davis, won the 1929 Thompson Cup Race at the National Air Races. The airplane had been designed by Herbert Rawdon and Walter Burnham at the request of Walter H. Beech. The aircraft was acquired by Curtiss-Wright as part of its acquisition of the Travel Air Company. The Travel Air Model R (NR614K) was transferred to the Curtiss-Wright Exhibition Company on January 27, 1930 to promote Curtiss-Wright's commercial airplanes. Dale "Red" Jackson was the primary pilot for most of the exhibition flights. In August of 1930, The Travel Air Model R (NR614K) was damaged in a landing accident near Des Moines, Iowa. Following the accident, the airplane was stripped of useable components such as the engine, and Curtiss-Wright had the damaged airplane transported to Lambert Airport in St. Louis and placed in temporary storage. Walter Hunter, a pilot for Universal Airlines flying out of Lambert Field, became aware of the airplane and purchased it to fly in the 1931 Bendix and Thompson Trophy Races. Walter transferred the airplane to Curtiss-Steinberg Airport in East St. Louis, Illinois where he arranged for his friend, Herbert Bud, who was now working for Parks Air College, to rebuild the airplane. Walter contacted Parks Air College officials and received permission for the airplane to be rebuilt using student labor in the school's shops under the supervision of Herbert Bud. Walter's Travel Air Model R was modified by adding larger fuel tanks and the paint scheme was changed to overall black with orange trim. The new Wright Whirlwind engine that had been installed in the "City of Chicago" was removed and installed in Walter's Travel Air Model R for its initial flight tests.

Curtiss-Steinberg Airport was located in Illinois, south of East St. Louis, Illinois, across the river from downtown St. Louis. The airport had been developed by a group consisting of Mark Steinberg, a St. Louis financier; Curtiss- Wright, an aircraft and engine manufacturer; the Transcontinental Air Transport Service; one of the companies that would later become Trans World Airlines; and the Pennsylvania Rail Road Company. Major C. Ray Wassall was the first

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manager of Field Operations. Construction of the airport began in early 1929, and it was dedicated in November 1929. The airport had three 1,650 foot paved runways and four hangers. [27] In 1927, the Parks Air College, founded by Oliver Parks, was built on land adjacent to the future airport site.[28]

Jimmy Doolittle was also working on his Travel Air Model R, (NR482N), renamed "Doolittle 400" at Curtiss-Steinberg airport and Parks Air College. Doolittle had acquired the Travel Air Model R from his employer, Shell Oil Company. On June 32, 1931, he crashed the "Doolittle 400" following failure of the ailerons. Doolittle bailed out of the stricken airplane at about 300 feet above the ground and survived. Since both Doolittle and Walter Hunter were working at Curtiss-Steinberg airport and Parks Air College on the airplanes that they intended to fly in the 1931 Bendix Trophy Race, it is certain that they met and became friends in spite of the fact that they would soon be in competition.

Now without an aircraft to fly in the Bendix Trophy Race, Doolittle contacted E. M. "Mattie" Laird and arranged to fly Laird's LC-DW500 "Super Solution" racing airplane in the 1931Bendix Trophy Race. The Laird "Super Solution" was powered by a 500hp Pratt & Whitney R-985 Wasp Junior radial engine.[29]

On August 6, 1931, Walter flew the rebuilt Travel Air Model R (NR614K) for a series of tests, and then flew the airplane to Wichita, Kansas to have a new NACA cowling installed. That cowling had been built by Herb Rawdon and Walter Burnham of the former Travel Air Company. Next Walter flew his Travel Air Model R to New Jersey where Wright Aeronautical replaced the "City of Chicago's" Wright Whirlwind engine with a new supercharged Wright SR-975E radial engine. The new engine had been run-in on the test stand for a period of 12 hours prior to installation in Walter's Model R to prove the long term reliability of the engine.[30]

After the new engine was installed, Walter immediately departed for Burbank, California. On the flight to Burbank, Walter stopped at St. Louis Lambert Field; Amarillo, Texas, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Walter chose Amarillo because the American Airways crew there knew him, and he figured he would get good and fast fuel service. During Walter's flight to

Burbank, he experienced severe vibration of the airplane because the propeller pitch had not been properly set for the new higher horsepower engine. This vibration would later lead to the difficulties Walter would experience during the Bendix Trophy Race. Between Albuquerque and Burbank, Walter had to keep dodging thunderstorms, so he chose to land at Winslow, Arizona to refuel. After refueling at Winslow, Walter took off for Burbank, arriving just two days before the start of the Bendix Race. At Burbank, Walter made a series of flight tests to adjust the propeller pitch to obtain the desired engine performance. With little sleep, Walter also was suffering from a severe head cold.

Of the eight entries in the race, the larger slower Lockheed airplanes were capable of making the distance to Cleveland without refueling, but Jimmy Doolittle in the Laird Super Solution and Walter Hunter in the Travel Air Model R would require refueling stops along the course of the race.

At 1:20 a.m. Pacific Standard Time, Louis Reichers in the Lockheed Altair took off, followed fifteen minutes later by Walter Hunter. Harold Johnson took off next in the Lockheed Orion, followed next by Jimmy Doolittle in the Laird Super Solution. The remaining four entries took off in the next twenty minutes. After takeoff, Walter climbed through the fog to an altitude above 18,000 feet to take advantage of a tail wind and fuel economy at that altitude.

Walter was forced to land the Travel Air at Winslow, Arizona because of mechanical problems. Walter was also suffering from a painful ear block caused by his head cold. The mechanical problems were corrected; Walter's Travel Air was refueled; and he was off on his way to Amarillo. Walter chose to bypass Albuquerque because the plane had been refueled at Winslow, Arizona. At Amarillo, the American Airways crew quickly refueled the Travel Air and Walter took off for St. Louis. Over Kansas, the big Wright radial engine began sputtering because the crew at Amarillo had failed to fill the main fuel tank. Walter diverted into Fort Riley and explained to the U. S. Army about the race. Walter's Travel Air was refueled, and he took off for Lambert Field in St. Louis.

At Lambert Field, the Travel Air was quickly fueled and Walter resumed his trip to Cleveland. Over Terra Haute, Indiana, the engine faltered again, and Walter was able to land the Travel Air on a grass field south of Terre Haute. After landing, the Wright radial engine caught fire. From nowhere, a fire truck arrived and extinguished the fire without damaging the engine. However, the fire did burn both magnetos, so Walter contacted Wright and a serviceman was dispatched to Terra Haute with two new magnetos. The new magnetos were installed and repairs made to the engine.[31] The repairs included replacing the broken fuel line that broke at the flared connections in the line. That failure was most likely a direct result of the vibration problems caused by the propeller pitch not being tuned to the higher powered engine on the trip to Burbank, The forced stop at Terre Haute and delay took Walter out of contention for the Bendix Race prize. In addition to Walter being forced out of the race, Louis Reichers became lost, ran out of fuel, and landed his Lockheed Altair at Beatrice, Nebraska.

Jimmy Doolittle won the 1931 Bendix Trophy Race, arriving in Cleveland nine hours, ten minutes and 21 seconds after departing Burbank. Doolittle's average speed was 223.058 miles per hour including the three refueling stops [32] Jimmy Doolittle in his autobiography, mentions Walter Hunter as the one of his competitors that he was most concerned about.[33]

The next morning Walter took off for Cleveland to enter the Thompson Trophy Race. Since Walter's arrival at Cleveland was the day after leaving Burbank, he could not win any of the Bendix Trophy prize money. Walter had arranged for Jimmy Haizlip to fly his Travel Air Model R in that race. Jimmy Haizlip was at the Cleveland airport and recognized Walter's Travel Air Model R as it approached the airfield and made a counter-clockwise circle around the Thompson Race pylons. After completing the race course, the engine caught fire again. The fire was not just confined to the engine bay. Gasoline has entered the cockpit and was sloshing around in the bottom of the fuselage between Walter's feet. Walter's head cold had his nose stuffed up so he did not smell the escaping fuel. Walter shut off the engine to glide in for a landing. A flare from the engine exhaust stacks must have ignited the fuel in the cockpit. Walter felt heat on his lower legs. The airplane was only about 200 feet above the ground when Walter decided to attempt to bail out of the burning aircraft. He rolled over the left side of the cockpit

and pulled the ripcord on his parachute as soon as he cleared the cockpit. The forward momentum of the airplane and Walter filled the parachute canopy instantly permitting Walter to land without further injury. At the same time Walter touched down, his Travel Air Model R struck the ground just a few feet from where Walter landed. As the airplane crashed, the engine buried itself in the ground and snuffed out the flames. Walter was taken by ambulance to the hospital at Berea, Ohio, where he would spend the next several months recovering from his burns. By October, 1931 Walter was again flying for American Airways.[34]

At least two replicas of the Travel Air Model R (NR 614K) have been built. Jim Younkin built a replica in the late 1970s and flew it at an air show in Denton, Texas in 1979.[35] The Beech Heritage Museum in Tullahoma, Tennessee, had a replica built in 2010. A picture of the replica may be seen on the Museum web site: https://www.facebook.com/beechcraftheritagemuseum/photos_stream. The web site has many pictures. Scrolling down through those pictures you will find a red Travel Air Model "R" with Black accents and the number 31 on its side. This replica of the Travel Air Model R represents how the airplane looked when it won the 1929 Bendix Trophy Race.

Walter's problems during the 1931 Bendix Trophy Race were not the only difficulties that the Hunter brothers would face. Several tragic events would occur to the Hunter family.

Tragic Events

Prior to the endurance flight, John Hunter flew night air mail between St. Louis, Missouri, Evansville, Indiana, and Chicago, Illinois. After the World Record Endurance Flight of 1930, John Hunter worked as a corporate pilot for Deep Rock Oil Corporation of Chicago. As a corporate pilot, John flew officials of the corporation to their desired destination.

In June 1932 John and a partner, Arthur Johnson of New Orleans, were successful bidders on a contract to fly mail from New Orleans to Pilot Town, Louisiana. Pilot Town is located at the south end of the Mississippi River Delta at the Gulf of Mexico. The mail route would be about 80 miles along the Mississippi River Delta. The terrain was mostly marshland and amphibious airplanes were the wise choice for the mail route. John purchased four new

amphibious airplanes to be used for the service. One of the planes had already been flown to New Orleans, and the remaining three airplanes were collected on the Mississippi River at Chester, Illinois [36]

On Saturday, June 25, 1932, Kenneth Hunter flew one of the amphibious airplanes, an Ireland N-1B Neptune with a Wright J-5 engine with a pusher propeller (propeller located behind the engine), for about one hour around Chester, Illinois. The airplane had an open cockpit located below the engine. On Sunday morning June 29, 1932, John, Kenneth, and Walter departed from Chester to deliver the amphibious airplanes to New Orleans, Louisiana. Kenneth was flying another of the three amphibious planes, an Eastman E-2 Sea Rover with a Curtis R-600 Challenger engine. That engine had a tractor propeller (propeller in front of the engine). The range of the airplane that Kenneth was flying was 360 miles, which required the three airplanes stop at Rosedale, Mississippi for fuel.[37] John was flying the Ireland N-1B Neptune with a pusher propeller. At Rosedale a thunderstorm came up and forced the Hunter brothers to stay in Rosedale overnight. On Monday morning June 27, the three Hunter brothers prepared to resume their trip to New Orleans. When the engines of the airplanes were started John realized that he had neglected to untie the tail of his airplane from the dock. He crawled out of the cockpit and proceeded towards the tail of his airplane to untie it. On his way to the tail of the airplane, John walked into the path of the pusher propeller and was struck in the head by the propeller. This apparently caused his body to fall into the river. Kenneth said that he heard the propeller hit John and turned just in time to see John's body fall into the river. The task of dragging the river began almost immediately, but it took nearly 90 minutes before John's body was recovered.[38]

It may be difficult to understand how a pilot with the flying experience that John Hunter had accumulated, could fall victim to such an accident. Keep in mind that nearly all, if not all of the airplanes that John had flown, had tractor propellers. That along with the fact that their trip to New Orleans had been delayed and they were in a hurry to travel to New Orleans were significant factors that resulted in the tragic accident at Rosedale, Mississippi.

After John's body was recovered, it was prepared for burial and shipped from Rosedale to Sparta via St. Louis on Monday evening. The three amphibious airplanes were left in the care of John's partner, Arthur Johnson. Walter and Kenneth flew to St. Louis on Tuesday in an American Airways Airliner. When John's body reached Sparta, it was taken to his mother's home on the corner of McClurken and Dickey Streets in Sparta. A short service was held at Mrs. Hunter's home on Wednesday afternoon. After that service, the body was then moved next door to the First Presbyterian Church where Rev James Murdock officiated at John's funeral service.

At the time of his death, John Alexander Hunter was 29 years old. He was survived by his wife, Laura McCarey Hunter, to whom he had been married just over three years, and one son, John Robert Hunter who was just over six months of age. John was preceded in death by his father, Alexander, and an infant daughter, a twin to his son John Robert.

John Alexander Hunter's funeral attracted a large crowd of friends and acquaintances. The church was filled to capacity long before the time of the funeral, and many persons had to observe the service from outside the church. The community of Sparta paid tribute to John Hunter, one of its most distinguished citizens, when all businesses closed during the hour of the funeral. There were many beautiful floral offerings including a floral blanket from Deep Rock Oil Corporation of Chicago. Honorary pallbearers were Elmer W. Lindenberg, Charles R. Fritschie, Harold E. Roberts and Gordon Israel, all connected with aviation in St. Louis and close friends of John.

Many telegrams and letters expressing condolences were received from all parts of the country. A letter from Mayor Fred G. Rapp of Columbia, Illinois was typical of the contents of many of these. Mayor Rapp wrote, "The citizens of Columbia join the good citizens of our sister city Sparta, in their deep sorrow in the loss of their favorite son, John Hunter. Southern Illinois has lost an ardent and valued exponent of aviation. John and his brother Kenneth acquired prominence by hard work against tremendous odds. Aviation owes his memory reverence and high honor. The Hunter brothers have made valued contributions to aviation in general. The citizens of Columbia express our sincere sympathy and heartfelt condolences to his mother, wife,

sisters, and brothers." Following the lavish service, the funeral cortege was led by state highway patrolmen to John's remains final resting place in Caledonia Cemetery.[39]

John's sudden death was quite a blow to the close-knit family. The loss of their father in 1912 bonded the family together into a "one for all" group. Even though each did his own thing, they came together on many occasions in support of one another.

Following John's death, Laura Hunter, John's widow, sold the "City of Chicago" to a gentleman in Blytheville, Arkansas. The airplane was sold several more times. Finally, the Stinson Detroiter suffered a crash on September 4, 1939. The airplane was damaged in the crash, so the registration was canceled on that date.[40]

Laura's sister, Mrs. E. F. Parrent and her husband built a beautiful new two-story home on East Broadway in Sparta. A multi-car garage was built behind the house. The second story of the garage was finished as an apartment for Laura and her son John to live in.

Unfortunately, John's death was not the last tragic event the Hunter family would endure. Albert, the eldest brother, who flew mainly for pleasure after the endurance flight, spent much of his time farming and attending to his family. In addition, Albert had the equipment and was frequently called upon to move houses or large heavy machinery, such as boilers. Albert was always looking for ways to improve his farm and buildings. During March, 1942, Albert was reclaiming sheet metal roofing from an old steel castings plant in Murphysboro, Illinois. On Tuesday, March 4, Albert and his son Herschel were on the roof removing roof panels. Albert sat down on a roof panel that had been unfastened from the roof supports. The panel folded, causing Albert to fall through the roof about 30 feet, to the dirt plant floor below. When Herschel reached Albert, he was alive. So Albert was loaded into the bed of a truck and transported to the local hospital. By the time he reached the hospital, he had expired due a broken neck. Ironically, the steel castings plant where Albert was working was adjacent to the Big Muddy River where his father's body was found floating in years before.

Albert William Hunter was survived by his widow, Pearl, three daughters: Elizabeth, wife of W.T. Hayer, Jr.; Pauline; Eileen; and a son, Herschel; two brothers, Walter and Kenneth;

and one sister, Irene, wife of James Hickerson; and his mother, Ida Jane Hunter of Sparta. Albert's funeral was held at the First Presbyterian Church of Sparta with services conducted by Rev. L. T. Krebs. Burial was made in Sparta's Caledonia Cemetery.[41]

After Albert's death, the title of the Hunter farm in Perry County was changed to Walter Hunter. Walter managed the farm and with the help of Albert's son, Herschel, provided income from the farm for his mother, Ida Jane Hunter.

The deaths of John and Albert prevented these two brothers from participating in World War II. Walter and Kenneth were the surviving brothers who supported the war effort in very special ways. Their story is next.

Kenneth Hunter Test Pilot

Kenneth Hunter was the more daring of the four Hunter brothers. In addition to flying with the Hunter Flying Circus, Kenneth "Beans" Hunter also flew with Charles A. Lindbergh barnstorming around the Midwest for several months during the summer of 1926.[42]

In late April 1929 Kenneth sold his airplane, a Standard J-1, registration number 5259, to two young men from Patterson, New Jersey. The men were aviation students at Lambert Field in St. Louis. As part of the sale, Kenneth gave flying instructions to one of the men for a period of about three weeks. The men then planned to fly the airplane back to their home in New Jersey.[43]

In July 1929 Kenneth departed for South Bend, Indiana to become a flight instructor at a local South Bend airport.[44] Later, Kenneth relocated to Davenport, Iowa and continued providing flying instructions in an American Eagle bi-plane.

On November 22, 1929 Kenneth was giving rides to three persons over Des Moines, Iowa in a Stinson SM-2 Junior airplane. The propeller of the airplane broke, causing severe vibrations that resulted in the airplane engine breaking loose from its mountings and dropping away from the airplane. The loss of the motor weight from the front of the airplane caused the airplane to become unbalanced and tail end heavy. Kenneth had all three passengers move as far forward in the cockpit as possible to rebalance the airplane. With some of the balance regained, Kenneth was able to land the airplane safely. For the remainder of 1929 and the early part of 1930, Kenneth continued giving flight instructions and hauling passengers in a variety of aircraft and at various locations.

On Wednesday, December 18, 1929, Kenneth flew from Davenport, Iowa to Sparta during a snowstorm. Kenneth stopped in St. Louis and picked up his brother, Walter, who had returned to St. Louis after flying air mail to Omaha, Nebraska. Both Kenneth and Walter landed safely at fairgrounds in Sparta. That snowstorm was considered one of the worst experienced in recent years.[45]

On October 18, 1931, a friend of the Hunters was killed in airplane accident northwest of Freeburg, Illinois. Kenneth and another pilot, Alfred Dunlap, were returning to Sparta from a Hunter Flying Circus performance at an airfield west of Belleville, Illinois. Alfred was flying a Curtiss Junior with a "pusher prop" and Kenneth was flying a new Ryan Brougham monoplane.[46] That airplane had been purchased from B. F. Mahoney, the owner of Ryan Aircraft Company. He had opened a plant in St. Louis, Missouri at Lambert Airfield. [47]

There was a report that Kenneth Hunter had some aspiration to becoming heavyweight-boxing champion. Kenneth had decided that a career in boxing would pay more than flying. He planned to be tutored by Kid Howard, a boxing instructor in Chicago.[48] Later, Kenneth denied the report saying that the report originated when he and Joe C. Bates went to St. Louis with the intention of booking a boxing bout with some amateur boxers for fun.[49]

In Tuesday, July 19, 1932, Kenneth became involved in an altercation with C. W, Morrow, proprietor of the Boedeker-Connor Motor Company, the local Ford Dealer in Sparta. Sparta City Marshal Smith arrested Kenneth and attempted to place him in a jail cell. Kenneth escaped from Marshal Smith before he was jailed. Mr. Morrow went to Chester and swore out state warrants for Kenneth Hunter. The Sheriff came to Sparta to serve the warrants on Kenneth, but was unable to find him.[50] Kenneth was later located, arrested and released on bond. On Wednesday August 24, Kenneth pled guilty to the charges in Justice E. J. Barnowski's court in Chester. Kenneth paid a $50 fine plus court costs and was released.[51]

At about 2:00 am on Sunday May 13, 1934, Kenneth was shot in the abdomen by Dr. O. R. Bullard of St. Louis following an altercation in the doctor's cottage at the Sparta Country Club. Dr. Bullard reportedly found Kenneth molesting a woman guest in the bedroom of Dr. Bullard's cottage. Dr. Bullard shot Kenneth with a 0.32 caliber Colt revolver. After shooting Kenneth, Dr. Bullard gave emergency treatment to Kenneth and then rode along with him in the ambulance to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Belleville. Emergency surgery was performed at the hospital the next morning. The surgery repaired the wounds in Kenneth intestine, but the bullet was not removed. After the shooting, Dr. Bullard was not arrested, but was suspended from membership at the Sparta Country Club. Dr. Bullard agreed to pay any expenses Kenneth incurred because of the shooting.[52]

On July 9, 1936, Kenneth purchased a Keystone Patrician tri-motor airplane at Marshal, Michigan. This airplane was large enough to carry 18 passengers plus some cargo. The Patrician was powered by three Wright Cyclone engines rated at 525 hp each.[53] Kenneth flew that airplane back towards Sparta, stopping at a number of locations on his way home. At each stop, he hauled passengers for $2 a person. In September, he finally arrived near Sparta, landing on a farm north of town owned by Miller Burns. From that location, in addition to hauling passengers, Kenneth also put on a flying circus featuring parachute jumpers who made a triple jump. The jumper opened a small parachute after exiting the airplane, discard that chute, open another parachute, discard that chute and open a third parachute before landing.[54]

After flying the Patrician for several weeks, hauling passengers around the Midwest, Kenneth resumed giving flying instructions. For the next several years, Kenneth continued giving flying instructions and carrying passengers in a variety of aircraft. While flying at Curtiss Steinberg Airport, Kenneth met a fellow pilot who introduced Kenneth to his sister, Earlyn. After meeting Earlyn, Kenneth started dating her and eventually married Earlyn.

During 1940 Kenneth flew for Iowa Aerial Surveys Company out of Des Moines, Iowa. On August 10, 1940, Kenneth began giving instructions to Army Air Corps aviation cadets through Parks Air College at Curtiss Steinberg Airport in East St. Louis, Illinois. Initially the instructions were given in a PT-17 Stearman Bi-plane. In September 1940, instruction was switched to a Fairchild PT-19s. The U.S, Army Air Corps chose the PT-19 for training because its flight characteristics were closer to the fighter aircraft that the students would be soon flying. Major C. Ray Wassall was Flight Commander in charge of training USAAC Cadet Pilots.[55] Major Wassall and Kenneth were well-acquainted and, that is probably the reason why Kenneth became involved in instructing cadet pilots.

Kenneth served the United States during World War II by assisting Lockheed in supplying properly functioning aircraft to the U.S. Army Air Corps and the U. S. Navy. As such, Kenneth served a critical role in helping the United States win World War II.

Kenneth's work with Lockheed began during February 1941 when Kenneth went to Montreal, Canada and began several weeks of training to fly Hudson bombers. The Hudson Bombers were a light twin-engined bomber that Lockheed built for the British. In May, 1941, Kenneth began ferrying Hudson bombers from Burbank, California through Nashville, Tennessee to Montreal, Canada. He made his last trip to Montreal on July 24, 1941.

In August 1941, Kenneth started working for Lockheed as a production test pilot in Burbank, California. For the next several months, Kenneth made a number of flights locally at Burbank in Lockheed aircraft. On February 11, 1942, Kenneth made his first flight in a P-38

Lightning. The P-38 Lightning was a twin-boomed fighter, with a central nacelle that contained the cockpit and weapons. The fighter was powered by two twelve-cylinder 1,150 hp Allison V-1710 turbo-charged engines. The fighter was designed by Lockheed's Designer, Clarence "Kelly" Johnson. The P-38 first flew in 1939 and served in both the European and Pacific Theaters during World War II. The weapons on some P-38s were replaced with cameras and these aircraft were used for valuable aerial reconnaissance. The P-38 Lightning remained in production throughout World War II with more than 10,000 being built. The P-38s were not as successful in the European Theater because of the high altitude they flew where the air temperature was quite low. However, the P-38 proved to be very successful in the Pacific Theater against the Japanese. Richard Bong and Thomas McGuire both flew P-38s to become America's Top Fighter Aces with 40 and 38 victories respectfully.[56]

Early models of the P-38 Lightning would lose control when placed in a high speed dive. The loss of control was eventually determined to be due to compressibility issues. This problem was solved by the addition of under wing dive flaps that changed the center of lift of the wing and eliminated the dive recovery problem. Some P-38s were modified and used by Lockheed for test and development of other airplane designs such as the XP-80 Jet fighter.[57]

From February 1942, Kenneth continued to fly P-38 Lightings. His job as a production test pilot was to make the initial flight in an airplane after production was completed to check the airplane's functions and to identify any deficiencies. After a number of P-38s were checked and all assembly complete, a group of production test pilots delivered the airplanes to the USAAC at Hamilton Field near San Pablo, California. One of the Production Test Pilots flew a Lockheed L-18 Lodestar along with the group to ferry the pilots back to the Lockheed Terminal. On some delivery trips, Kenneth, flew the L-18 Lockheed Lodestar transport.

Kenneth also flew Hudson bombers and Lockheed Venturas as they came off the Lockheed Vega plant assembly line for their production test flight. The Venturas were an improved version of the Hudson bombers that were powered by two 2,000 hp Pratt and Whitney Double Wasp eighteen-cylinder air-cooled radial engines. Venturas were built by the Vega

Division of Lockheed and were used by Briton's Royal Air Force, the U. S. Navy, and the U. S. Marine Corps.[58]

During World War II, it was common for an aircraft company to license other aircraft companies to build aircraft they had designed. This was the case with Boeing. By 1944, Boeing was busy building the B-29 bomber so they contracted with several aircraft manufacturers to build B-17s. The Lockheed Vega Division produced about 500 B-17Fs and 2,250 B-17Gs. The Douglas Aircraft Company built 605 B-17Fs and 2395 B-17Gs under contract to Boeing.[59]

Starting in March 1944, Kenneth made nearly three dozen flights in B-17 bombers for their production test flight. The B-17 bombers were being produced under license from Boeing at the Lockheed Vega Plant. Kenneth also made production test flights in PB4Ys, a naval variant of the Consolidated B-24 bomber. Lockheed was contracted to modify these Consolidated B-24 bombers according to the Navy's specifications for duty with the U.S. Navy. The four engines on the PB4Y Privateer were 1,200 hp Pratt & Whitney R-1830 radial engines without turbo-chargers. The low altitudes which the Navy operated these aircraft at eliminated the need for turbo-charging.

During World War II, Lockheed employed a number of test pilots. Some were engineering test pilots that worked for Milo Garrett Burcham, Chief Engineering Test Pilot for Lockheed. Notable men like, Anthony W. "Tony" LeVier, Herman R. "Fish" Salmon, Joseph "Joe" Towle, James Joseph "Jimmy" Mattern and Ralph Virden were the pilots that flew new aircraft designs and re-designs as the aircraft prototype was built. These pilots worked alongside the design engineers to develop a workable aircraft design. A larger number of test pilots, like Kenneth, were production test pilots. Their job was to fly the aircraft after the production was completed to evaluate the performance of the aircraft to insure it met the design criteria. Some of the production test pilots working for Lockheed worked under Marshall E. "Babe" Headle, Chief Pilot in charge of Flight Operations, and included Lewis D. "Swede" Parker, Ray "Slim" Meskimen and Carlton P. "Nick" Nickolson.

In late 1944, Grumman began production of the Grumman F7F-3 Tigercat at Bethpage, New York. The US Navy had called for the Grumman F7F-3P, a photo recon version, and the

F7F-3N, a night fighter version of the single seat F7F fighter. In order to complete production of all the aircraft the Navy wanted, all aircraft were completed as F7F-3s at the Grumman Bethpage, New York plant and then ferried to the Navy-Lockheed Service Center at Van Nuys, California where they were completed as photo and night fighter variants before delivery to the Navy and Marine units.[60] Since Kenneth was a production test pilot for Lockheed, he flew several of the F7F-3s after the modifications were completed. Gordon Israel, a good friend of Kenneth, was the lead designer for the Grumman F-7F.[61]

While Kenneth was flying a Grumman F7F-3 on October 18, 1945, the right engine caught fire. Kenneth was able to land the airplane, and the person riding in the rear cockpit escaped unharmed. However, Kenneth was badly burned exiting the cockpit of the F7F-3. His injuries put an end to his flying for several weeks. With World War II over, orders for aircraft reduced, Lockheed had a number of unneeded Production Test pilots. When Kenneth was able to return to flying status, he was without a job.

With the help of one of Kenneth's friends, Kenneth was able to secure a job as Chief Corporate Pilot for Kerr-McGee Corporation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Some years before this, Kerr-McGee had purchased Deep Rock Oil Company. Deep Rock Oil Company furnished the fuel and oil for the Hunter Brothers Endurance flight in 1930. When Kenneth joined Kerr-McGee, Robert S. Kerr, Chairman of the Board for Kerr-McGee, was Governor of Oklahoma, a post he held until 1947. Robert Kerr was then elected as U. S. Senator from Oklahoma in 1948 and served from then until his death on January 1, 1963.

When Kenneth started as Chief Corporate Pilot for Kerr-McGee, a DC-3 (NC65162) was the corporate aircraft. Kenneth made many flights in that DC-3.

During 1963, while working for Kerr-McGee, Kenneth returned to Tilden, Illinois and purchased the Standard J-1 airplane that the Hunter brothers originally purchased from Robertson Aircraft Corporation in June 1924. The Hunters had sold the airplane to the Hopp brothers of Tilden years before. Kenneth arranged for Herschel Hunter to haul the airplane to Oklahoma City, where it was restored to flying condition in the Kerr-McGee hanger at Will Rogers Airport. After restoration, Kenneth flew the airplane several times in air shows at

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Oklahoma City. In 1964, Kenneth donated the airplane to the Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum, where the airplane resides today. The Inventory Number of the airplane is A19640620000. The airplane can be seen on this web site: http://www.nasm.si.edu/collections/artifact.cfm?id=A19640620000.

On Tuesday, January 15, 1974, Kenneth age 65 and his co-pilot, Jack Earnest Gardner, returning to Oklahoma City in Kerr-McGee's North American NA-265 Saberliner (N5565). As they were making their final approach to Oklahoma City's Will Rogers Airport, the airplane crashed, killing both Kenneth and Jack. The National Transportation Safety Board Report (FTW74AF055) of the accident lists pilot fatigue and limited visibility due to fog as factors contributing to the crash. Kenneth had 21,500 hours total flying time with 2,000 hours in the North American NA-265 Saberliner.

Kenneth was survived by his wife Earlyn of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Kenneth's remains were buried in Caledonia Cemetery in Sparta on Friday, January 18, 1974 following a graveside service.[62]

Walter Hunter's story is next. Walter's experience follows the evolution of American Airlines to the organization it is today. Today American Airlines, is one the largest airlines serving both domestic and international personal travel and air freight

Walter Hunter Airline Pilot

According to an American Airlines Pilots System Seniority List published in December 1, 1939, Walter J. Hunter was the 15th most senior pilot with American Airlines.[63] Walter's seniority date was listed as October 1, 1928. This was the date that Walter started working for Robertson Aircraft Corporation in St. Louis, Missouri. Charles A. Lindbergh had resigned as chief air mail pilot for Robertson and was replaced by Lindbergh's best friend Harlan A. "Bud"

Gurney. Walter and his aviation skills were well known to Bud Gurney, and it is quite possible that Gurney recruited Walter to fly airmail for Robertson Aircraft Corporation.

In 1929, Robertson became part of the Aviation Corporation (AVCO). In January 1930 the board of directors of AVCO divided the acquired airline companies into Colonial Air Lines and Universal Air Lines.[64] Universal Air Line's offices were in St. Louis, Missouri. The name of the airline was to be changed to Universal Air Ways, but in 1930, the executive committee decided to change the name to American Airways. [65]

During these early days working as an air mail pilot, Walter flew Curtiss Robin airplanes that were built by the Curtiss-Robertson Airplane Manufacturing Company of Missouri. The Curtiss Robins were powered either by Curtiss OX-5 engines or Curtiss Challenger radial engines. The airplane was a three-seat cabin monoplane that could carry up to 425 lbs of pilot, passengers, and mail.[1] On June 1, 1929, Walter was joined by an acquaintance from Sparta, Bryan "Fuzzy" Robinson.[66]

On June 15, 1931, the postmaster extended American Airways route from Atlanta to Los Angeles (CAM 33). Branch routes were added from Jackson, Mississippi north to Memphis and south to New Orleans.[67] Based on Walter's pilot log, he also flew mail in a Stearman Speedmail. One of the Stearman Speedmail biplanes that Walter used to fly mail between St. Louis and New Orleans during February 1932 was purchased and restored by Mike Williams, a retired Delta Airlines Pilot.[68]

Walter continued to fly mail and passengers between St. Louis and New Orleans in a Fokker F-10. The Fokker F-10 airplane was powered by three 420 hp Pratt & Whitney Wasp Radial Engines. The plane could carry twelve passengers. On March 31, 1931, TWA Flight 599 in route to Los Angeles crashed near Bazaar, Kansas, killing eight people including football coach Knute Rockney. [69] The death of the very popular Knute Rockney focused a lot of attention on that crash. Eddie Rickenbacker, then general manager of TWA, was concerned about the cause of the crash. Charles Lindbergh as chairman of a federal aviation commission

was asked to investigate the crash to determine the cause.[70] Lindbergh determined that the crash was the result of deterioration of the wooden wing structure. That finding prompted the federal government to stop operation of all passenger carrying aircraft with wooden wing structures. The Fokker F-10 airplane was removed from passenger service.

In February 1933, all air mail contracts were canceled by the government. Several months later new government private mail contracts were allocated and mail flights were permitted to resume. American Airways changed its name to American Airlines.

American Airlines started flying Douglas DC-2 airliners. The Douglas DC-2 was a fourteen seat, twin engined airliner powered by two Wright R-1820 Cyclone Radial Engines. Walter flew DC-2s between Memphis, Tennessee and Newark, New Jersey. [71]

On January 15, 1936, Walter flew an American Airlines DC-2 from Newark, New Jersey to Memphis, Tennessee. At Memphis, Walter's crew was relieved by pilot Gerald Vaughan Marshall and co-pilot Glenn Freeland. The airplane resumed its trip to the west coast, and about 30 minutes after takeoff, the airplane crashed into a swampy area near Goodwin, Arkansas, about 40 miles west of Memphis. All 17 persons on the airplane were killed in the crash. The cause of the crash was investigated and an NTSB report was issued: Walter reported the airplane was in excellent flying shape and that both motors were functioning well when he landed that airplane at Memphis. [72]

The Douglas DC-2 was too small to carry enough passengers to make enough revenue for the airline. In December 1935, American started service with the DC-3 airplane.[73] The DC-3s were first introduced with fourteen sleeping berths and were designated DSTs (Douglas Sleeper Transport). Later day passenger DC-3s were produced that could carry 28 passengers. The Douglas DC-3 was powered by two 1,475 hp Wright R-1820 Cyclone, nine cylinder Radial Engines.[74]

One of Walter's duties with American Airlines was to investigate new routes for the airplane to travel in transporting passengers and cargo to more cities. In February, 1939, Walter flew a Stinson SR-9B Reliant American Route Survey Airplane to survey to check air routes.

In April 1942, many American Airline crews and some of American's fleet of DC-3 aircraft were transferred into the U. S. Air Transport Command to support the logistics of U. S. troops during World War II. Walter's seniority permitted him to remain stateside flying for American Airlines on domestic routes.[75] Remaining stateside, Walter provided a much needed service for the war effort by flying engineers and business executives to meetings in which new equipment was being designed and produced to support the effort of US troops in Europe and the South Pacific theaters. With the few pilots left stateside to fly domestic passengers, Walter spent nearly every day flying for American Airlines.

In time, Walter progressed to flying Douglas DC-4s. The DC-4 airliner was powered by four 1,450 hp Wright R-1820 Radial Engines and could carry 52 passengers. By 1947, Walter was flying Douglas DC-6s on domestic routes. The DC-6 was originally intended as a C-118 Liftmaster Military Transport for the U. S. Army Air Corps and as a R6D for the U. S. Navy. Since it became available near the end of World War II, the design was re-worked for airplane service. The DC-6 could carry up to 56 passengers and was powered by four 1,800 hp Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp Radial Engines. The cabin of the aircraft was pressurized to permit the airplane to fly up to 21,900 feet altitude. Flying at the higher altitude, the airplanes could cruise at a faster speed and consume less fuel. This further improved the profit of the airline. [76]

By 1953, Walter was flying Douglas DC-7 airliners for American Airlines from Washington D.C. to Los Angles. The DC-7 was a civilian version of the Douglas C-74 Globemaster Military Transport. The crew of a DC-7 consisted of two pilots, a flight engineer, and two flight attendants. The airplane could carry up to 95 passengers and was powered by four 3,250 hp Wright R-3350 Radial Engines. The cabin of the aircraft was pressurized to permit the airplane to fly up to 28,400 feet altitude.[77] On October 1, 1953, Walter moved from Memphis to Los Angles because of his flight assignment with American Airlines. Later, Walter married Jules Corrigan Volmer at a fellow pilot's home in Chester, Illinois.

In 1961, American Airlines started jet airline service with the Boeing 707. Since Walter was a Senior Captain with American Airlines, he transitioned into flying the 707s.[78] The Boeing

707 could carry up to 179 passengers. The crew of the Boeing 707 airplane consisted of two pilots and a flight engineer. The Boeing 707 was powered by four Pratt & Whitney JT3D-1 jet engines.[79]

On March 11, 1966, Walter turned 60 years of age and as required by the federal government, retired from American Airlines. Walter had accumulated more than 30,000 hours of flying time by the time he retired. After retirement, Walter seldom took advantage of his ability to travel free on American Airlines. Walter much preferred to drive a car and enjoy the scenery of the countryside.

An article in the May 12, 1974 edition of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* newspaper began by quoting one hanger-boasting pilot to say that the most famous aviator he knew was Walter Hunter. He went on to explain that Walter Hunter was the only aviator he knew who had performed on stage at Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood.[280]

Walter James Hunter died on Tuesday, October 18, 1983 at St. John Mercy hospital in St. Louis. Walter had lived in Town and Country, Missouri since his retirement from American Airlines as their most senior Jet Captain. Walter was survived by his wife, Jules Corrigan Hunter of Town and Country, Missouri. Following Walter's funeral service in Percy, Illinois Walter's remains were buried in the Cutler City Cemetery, the same cemetery that his father was eventually buried in.[81]

Update

The four Hunter brothers are remembered today. On Sunday, October 19, 1961, a new community airport at Sparta, Illinois was dedicated as Hunter Field to honor the four Hunter brothers. For that dedication, only two of the four brothers were alive. Kenneth, one of the two brothers that set the endurance record was unable to attend the dedication because he had to fly Senator Robert Kerr to Kerr's ranch to meet with President John F. Kennedy. Walter Hunter, the

only other brother still living, was busy working as a Captain for American Airlines so he was unable to attend the dedication. [82]

The four Hunter brothers were inducted into the Illinois Aviation Hall of Fame in 1996. The award was accepted in their memory by John Hunter's Son, John Robert Hunter. The award read the interest of the Hunter brothers "helped establish standards from which others could learn and further the advancement of aviation." [83]

Dale G. "Red" Jackson, whose nickname was "Flying Fool", was a "hot-dog" pilot. Jackson, one of the pilots that caused the Hunter brothers to miss out on a sizeable financial return for their World Flight Endurance Record, was killed on January 6, 1932 in Miami, Florida. Dale Jackson was in Miami for the air races that were to start the following day. Walter Beech agreed that Dale Jackson could fly a new Curtiss-Wright Teal Amphibian. Jackson took off in the airplane and as soon as he gained a bit of altitude proceeded to do barrel rolls. One wing of the airplane folded on the third barrel roll, causing the airplane to crash, killing Jackson.[84]

Forrest O'Brine, the other pilot that claimed to break the Hunter brother's World Flight Endurance Record, was older than Jackson and a more serious person. During World War II, O'Brine flew for the U. S. Air Ferry Command. O'Brine was killed in an airplane crash at El Paso, Texas on June 19, 1944.

The lives of the four Hunter brothers ended not as one might expect. Only Kenneth was killed in an airplane crash. John's death was the result of flying, but the amphibious airplane was on the water when John was killed. Albert's death occurred while he was recovering metal roofing from a metal castings plant. Walter's death was due to cancer.

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Glossary

A

Altimeter – An instrument that indicates to the pilot the distance the aircraft is above sea level

Ailerons – the action of the ailerons located on the trailing edge of the wings, moves the airplane on its longitudinal axis. With the aileron straight, the wing has normal lift. Lowering the aileron increases lift and raises the wing. Raising the aileron decreases lift and lowers the wing.

Axial Flow – Flow along the center axis, parallel to the centerline of the engine.

B

Barnstorming - Exhibitions of stunt flying performed in small country towns and rural areas.

Biplane – an airplane with two sets of wings, one above and usually slightly forward of the lower wing

C

CAM – Contract Air Mail route

Cockpit – An enclosed space containing seats for the pilot, co-pilot and controls for the aircraft.

Cowling – A streamlined housing covering an aircraft engine.

Curtiss- Wright Corporation - The combination of two companies formed by the most well known names in American aviation history, Glenn Curtiss and The Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville.

Curtiss – Wright Junior Airplane – originally named the Curtiss – Robertson CR-1 Sketer was a light sports aircraft produced in the United States during the 1930s. The Junior was powered by a three cylinder radial engine with a pusher propeller.

Curtiss Robin – a high wing monoplane powered by a Curtiss OX-5 engine. The plane was later fitted with a Curtiss Challenger air-cooled radial engine. The airplane was designed by the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company of Garden City, Long Island, New York. Most were built by the Curtiss-Robertson Airplane Manufacturing Company in Anglum, Missouri.

D

Doolittle, James H. "Jimmy" - An aviation pioneer who received his flight training at Rockwell Field in California and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the US Army Signal Officers Reserve Corps on March 11, 1918. Doolittle made many pioneering flights between World War I and World War II. After completing his Bachelors Degree at the University of California, Doolittle went on to complete his Masters degree in Aeronautics in June 1924 and his Doctors degree in Aeronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in June 1925. Doolittle is best well known for leading the April 18, 1942 air raid on Tokyo, Japan in a B-25 bomber.

E

Elevators – The elevators are located at the tail of the plane. The action of the elevators moves the plane on its lateral axis. With the elevator straight, the plane remains level. Raising the elevator forces the tail down and the nose rises. Lowering the elevator forces the tail up and the nose drops.

F

Fuselage – The central structure of an airplane body. The engine, wing, and tail surfaces are attached to this structure. Normally the pilot's cockpit is enclosed in this structure.

H

Haizlip, Jimmy – A World War I hero and a successful racing pilot. Jimmy Haizlip worked for Shell Oil Company with his friend Jimmy Doolittle.

Hispano-Suiza 8 Aircraft Engines – A Barcelona, Spain based automobile engine company that switched to the production of V8 aircraft engines in February 1915. These engines were

produced under license in France, Great Briton, Italy and the United States. The engines were produced in the United States by the Curtiss Wright Corporation.

Hudson Bomber - The Hudson Bomber was a 1938 proposal to the British Air Ministry based a military version of Lockheed's Model 14 Super Electra twin-engined passenger transport. The Hudson Bomber was powered by two Wright Cyclone nine-cylinder radial engines rated at 1,100 hp each. It was armed with two 0.303 Browning machine guns in the dorsal turret, two 0.303 Browning machine guns in the nose and could carry 750 lb of bombs or depth charges. RAF Hudson Bombers delivery began in February 1939. The bombers were delivered to RCAF airfields in Canada where they were prepared for shipment to Liverpool, England.

I

Israel, Gordon, a friend of the Hunters, Gordon worked for Benjamin O. Howard and designed two racing airplanes. Next Gordon worked for Grumman Aircraft designing the F7F, F8F, F9F and the XF10F-1, the first airplane designed with a variable sweep wing. After the US Navy canceled the XF10F-1 project, Gordon joined the Lear Corporation designing the Learstar Jet.

J

Johnson, Clarence L. "Kelly" – A graduate of the University of Michigan, hired by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in 1933. Johnson went on the become Lockheed's Chief Design Engineer. Johnson was instrumental in the design of the P-38 Lightning and development of the Hudson Bomber designed after the Lockheed Vega.

Jet Engines – A single shaft engine with an axial flow compressor that feeds compressed air to the combustor section where fuel is ignited, heating the compressed air. The heated air expands in volume in the combustion section causing force to drive the turbine. After exiting the turbine, the exhausting air provides thrust to move the aircraft forward. In the late 1930s, England's Sir Frank Whittle and Germany's Hans Von Ohain created gas turbine engines for aircraft propulsion.

L

Lambert Field – Located 11 miles northwest of downtown St. Louis, originally called Kinloch Field, a place for launching balloons, Major Albert Bond Lambert, the first person in St. Louis to hold a pilot's license, converted a corn field into an airfield at his own expense. In 1925, Lambert purchased the airfield and converted it into a base for passenger and freight service. In 1928, Albert sold the air field to the City of St. Louis. Lambert Field became the first municipal air port in the United States. Today, it is known as Lambert - St. Louis International Airport.

Lockheed – An aircraft manufacturing company was formed in 1926 by Allan Loughead and sold to Detroit Aircraft Corporation in 1929. The Great Depression bankrupted Detroit Aircraft so a group of investors headed by bothers Robert and Courtland Gross and Walter Varney, bought the company in 1932. Robert E. Gross was named chairman of the the Lockheed Corporation in 1934. Lockheed was headquartered at the airport in Burbank, California.

M

Magneto – a small electric generator with an armature that rotates in a magnetic field provided by permanent magnets to provide electric energy to the spark plugs. Airplane motors normally had two magnetos, each powering one of the two spark plugs in each cylinder of the engine.

Monoplane – An airplane with a single wing located either above or below the fuselage

N

NACA – National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics

P

Pusher Propeller – a propeller mounted on the rear of the aircraft engine, usually mounted behind the wing that pushes the aircraft through the air

PB4Y-1 – A Navy version of the Consolidated B-24 bomber. The Navy used the PB4Y-1 for anti-submarine patrols

R

Radial Aircraft Engine – a multi cylinder aircraft engine with the cylinders arranged on the radius of the center shaft that drives the propeller. The cylinders were fined to permit air-cooling. On engines that are more powerful, the cylinders were arranged in two or more rows and staggered to permit air-cooling

Ryan Brougham – a high wing monoplane designed by Donald A. Hall and built by the Ryan Flying Company. The Ryan Brougham was the basis for the design of Charles A. Lindbergh's "Spirit of St. Louis".

Rudder – a vertical blade at the back of the vertical tail used to change the horizontal direction of the airplane. Action of the rudder moves the plane on its vertical axis. With the rudder in the neutral position, the plane flies straight. Moving the rudder to the left, forces the tail to the right. Moving the rudder to the right, forces the tail to the left.

S

Stall – when the forward speed of the airplane decreases to the point that airflow across the wing fails to provide enough lift to keep the airplane from dropping towards the ground.

Standard J-1 – The airplane was designed by Charles Day, the designer of the famous Curtiss "Jenny". The initial Standard J-1s were underpowered by a 90 hp four cylinder Hall-Scott engine. The airplane was designed to train pilots for World War I, but the Curtiss "Jenny" proved to be better suited for the task. More than 1600 Standard J-1s were produced during the war. After the war, surplus Standards were purchased by several aircraft companies and converted by replacing the four cylinder engine with 150 hp Hispano-Suiza V8 engines. These airplanes were available to the civilian population at a very reasonable cost. For that reason, the converted Standard J-1s were commonly used for barnstorming.

Stinson – Eddie Stinson, with the support of 25 financial backers started the Stinson Airplane Syndicate in Detroit Michigan in early 1926.

T

Tachometer – an instrument that indicates the rotation speed of the airplane motor in revolutions per minute (rpm)

Tractor Propeller- A propeller mounted on the front of the engine that pulls the aircraft through the air

U

USAAC – U. S. Army Air Corps

V

V-8 Engine - An eight-cylinder engine with cylinders arranged in two rows of four cylinders placed in a "V" at an angle of 22 to 30 degrees off the vertical. The piston of each cylinder was connected to a central crankshaft that powered the propeller. The cylinders were normally cooled by a water jacket the surrounded the cylinders and the water was then pumped to a radiator for cooling.

W

Wing Walking – A stunt where a performer stands atop the wing and may transfer from one airplane to another. The performer usually wears a harness with a cable attached to the airplane as a safety measure.

Wright Aircraft engines – Wright Aeronautical Corporation, a division of the Curtiss-Wright Corporation, purchased and produced air cooled radial engines designed and originally built by Lawrance Aero Engine Company

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